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THE MOUNTAIN AND THE TREE

By the same Author

THE LOVE OF THE FOOLISH ANGEL
THE GREEN LACQUER PAVILION

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE TREE

by

HELEN BEAUCLERK

COLLINS
48 PALL MALL LONDON
1935



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
COLLINS CLEAR-TYPE PRESS : LONDON AND GLASGOW
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The world of magical and religious beliefs and practices in which the men and women of these four stories live, is reconstructed largely from material found in the works of Sir James Frazer, J. L. Myres, Professor Nillsson, Sir Arthur Evans, Jane Harrison, Alfred Loisy, F. Legge and J. B. Firth, to whom my humblest acknowledgments are offered.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

A race of men lived on an island. At that time Zeus was not born, nor Jehovah. Heaven was empty; its silent hills and groves held no form that had a face or feet or wings or tail. But on earth everything lived as men lived. Trees walked, the people said, and spoke; the rocks on which the deer and the wild goats leaped could be moved to anger, and the plants and shrubs beside the springs to vengeance. Yet though all things lived like men, their souls were not as men's souls. The spirit of a tree had branches, and a goat's spirit butted with its horns.

In those days men lived in innocence. They loved as the beasts do. In the spring, when the sun's heat was returned and the earth sprouting, the madness that made the doves call in the plane trees and the lions roll in the scrub, seized men likewise. They loved also in the summer, rejoicing in the ripened fruits and their full bellies; and sometimes at other seasons, for warmth or company's sake or because they wished to. They did not know that anything came of their gambols. It was, they said, the virtues of the ceremonies that they performed each year that gave women children, and the power of the holy mountain that rose above their homes, and of the pine-trees, evergreen and full of sighs and scent, that grew upon its side. Yet to bear children was, after food, their sole concern.

They killed in the same way, innocently, slaughtering maidens at sowing-time and youths at harvest and

scattering their limbs about the fields, to revive the vigour of the slaughtered crop, to feed it, blood to blood. In the early spring they slew young men, and in the winter tore and devoured infants, amidst fierce dances and wild fighting. But their hearts were pure. They were the seed ; they were the youths, the maidens and the infants ; all were one. And though it was dangerous to kill, men and the earth must live, and only life, they said, gave life. Such killings, performed in company, ceremonially, were holy, and holiness was double in their minds, desirable and dreadful, safe and dangerous, life-giving and death-dealing. It was the point where fear and desire meet, so that a thing especially enjoined was holy and a thing forbidden also. They knew no sin but only the holiness that bred pleasure and the holiness that bred pain. But they were afraid of death and of birth and of everything to do with these matters.

The mountains on the island were many and deeply cut with caves and chasms. Upon terraces, hewn and levelled on the hillsides, the people had built their huts. Above them the hills went up, green with oak forests where pigs rooted, and above the forests the pine-trees raised their stark heads and higher still the yet starker peaks, bare and snowy and haunted by storm and thunder. Fire lived there, flashing forth sometimes, and sometimes the hills groaned and trembled. It was said that the tallest of the mountains was the first mother of the people. They had issued, full grown, from a cave in its flanks ; although some declared that they were sea-born, from dolphins maybe ; or had come out of the sea, a race of mighty swimmers, or from across the sea. Fig trees grew in the plains and in the higher places, luscious and very holy trees

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that could live even on the brink of precipices; planes and oleanders grew beside the springs whose waters were so secret and so cold in the hot summer that they, too, were called holy; and in the coolness that the waters made, beans flourished, holiest of all the seeds that came out of the earth, more venerable than the berries of the lowlands or the barley of the little fields, as precious as the honey that the bees gave, blessing the people. There were apples and many other fruits upon the lower slopes. Here and there stood groves of cypresses, black shadows of the flames that the magicians lifted in the dark months to stir the infant day, the holy fire, and bring it to birth again out of the mountain. Beneath the hills, filling every eye, the sea lay, black, grey, green, blue, and rich with fish.

In the best and safest place, near to a spring and sheltered by great trees, there lived a woman. Her name may be given as Sophia for she was the wise woman of her tribe. Every year for twenty years she had borne a child. The women came to touch her breasts that they might be fertile as she was, and the men admired and feared her above all her kind, going to her arms as the bird goes to the serpent. Yet to possess her was an honour and very lucky. Constantly, in homage and propitiation, they brought her gifts. She was first among the gatherers of fruit and first among the sowers of seed and grain, leader of the dances and the feasts that the women held secretly before their sowing, and first, also, at the burial of the dead, which was another earthy business and had to do with sleep and night and darkness and the mother mountain, who was of the earth and gave life and took it back again. Above all things the men feared

corpses, dangerous and holy objects that spread death about them and filled the air with stinking ghosts. Only at certain times and with due care would they approach them. But women, because of the strange things that happened to them, were already dangerous and holy and therefore akin to dangerous and holy matters and safe with them. They were death's familiars. They could go to its very place, screaming and in agony, and return therefrom smiling and bringing children with them. Therefore let them bury and bring forth. They knew of what went into the ground and of what came out of it, like the snakes that moved in and out of the clefts and caves, in and out of the marshes. And of all women Sophia knew best, the people said, how to raise good crops and rear fine children, and how to lay dead men in the earth, with food and weapons for themselves and a feast, beside the grave, for the kinsmen, that the ghost might feel comforted and go quickly on his way; and how to burn torches and strong-smelling herbs to protect the dead from other spirits and to make a barrier between them and the living; and how, afterwards, to wash herself and her companions, so that they were rid of the death-stain and their fellows might again see and touch them safely.

Her wisdom was the wisdom of her mother and her mother's mother. It came to her by direct inheritance, they said, from the first woman, born of the holy mountain or of the sea. In a hollow on the hillside she had made a garden where she grew plants that healed the sick, strong spells that thrust out the spirits of pain and disquiet—cassia for purging and poppies that gave sleep and verbena that calmed the senses and so was held to be most sacred and most chaste,

and mint that soothed the pangs of colic and of child-birth. She taught her secrets only to her daughters. The gruel of mint and barley that she administered at every lying-in she had herself invented. It had brought her great honour. But with the other women she brewed, from barley or from honey, liquors that the people valued highly. They drank the wine mostly at festivals, for with it, they said, they swallowed strength and joy and holy ecstasy; each drinker took into himself the potency of a thousand spirits, became sturdy with the trees and rocks, swift with the running streams, brave with the boars and lions. Possessed by its power, the men ceased to dread the wild beasts that threatened their hunting, or the many-tailed sea-serpents that made their fishing dangerous, or the strangeness, pleasant yet saddening, that came from caressing women. In the winter it put a warmth into their souls so that they forgot the cold and the fallen leaves and their terror lest the dwindling day should die and they should presently die too. In the brewing of wine and in the growing of sweet herbs and plants, in every woman's art, save love, Sophia's eldest daughter, Melitta, was second only to her mother.

It happened one year, in the early spring, that Sophia was very weary. It was the season when the people went in procession to the pinegroves that were on the mountain and to the cave beyond, to cut down and carry home the holy tree that would give life and abundance to men and plants and animals. They came from every part, from the villages that were on the highest terraces and from those that were near the plain and those that were among the rocks above the sea, hunters and herdsmen and fishermen, with their chiefs and elders, and the women, sowers of grain and

gatherers of fruit. They took with them the tree that they had hewn the year before. It was withered now, its needles brown or fallen. A chosen number of young men carried it. And they took also skins of wine and baskets of meal and dried fruits and animals picked from their flocks, the finest they had, goats whose fleeces were thick as leaves in summer, and swine from the herds that fed in the forests. For presently they would feast. They had fasted and were clean. The winter spirits that had brought hunger and cold and fear and sickness had finally, incarnate in mud and dirt, been smeared upon their bodies and wiped wholly off again ; the ghosts of the dead, too, reblossoming in the new flowers, worshipful yet possibly malicious, had been fed with the holy beans and sent altogether away. Their bellies were purged. They were empty and sad, yet eager, being excited by the thought of food and by the spring-time.

But Sophia was not eager. Her breasts were heavy and her legs ached. She walked behind the tree, and as she went she flung her arms up and down and cried out. The movement tired her. Some of the men and women cried and tossed their arms as she did, and some blew upon huge sea-shells and some shook wooden rattles to keep their hearts up and to scare away the dangerous spirits and the wild beasts. The sun was shining. The infant day had not died in the dark months. Once again the winter ceremonies, the shed blood and the great fires and brandished torches, the fighting and dancing of the people, had renewed its life. It was a youth, no longer a babe new born, nor yet a lusty autumn hunter. The buds were green, the hills were bright with little flowers ; the air was sweet with their smell and with the smell of herbs. Between

the trees the sea shone blue as the sky. And all about Sophia the young men and women trod their spring dance, half-naked, their long curls tossing, their bodies glistening in the light. Sophia lifted her hands towards the sky, dropped them towards the earth, giver of strength. She sweated from her exertions and the sun's heat.

Foremost among the dancers she saw her daughter Melitta. She was a virgin; that year for the first time she had danced with the women. And save that her breasts were as apples and her legs slim as young birch-trees, she was Sophia herself, her mother made young again. Near to her were two youths, Manthos and Hyacinthos, twin brothers, the handsomest and cleverest of their kinsmen, first in hunting and fishing and fighting and in the sacred rites and in every craft. Their eyes were so keen that each, with a single arrow, could kill a wild goat as it fed upon the cliff-tops. Their hands were so steady and so swift that they could mould three earthen vessels in the time it took their fastest companion to shape one. The spells of Manthos were famous even among the old men. He could take up an animal that had been frightened or made angry, and hold and handle it, and in a moment it would be tamed, lying in his arms as though dead, and yet unharmed. Rain and fine weather followed the word of Hyacinthos.

In this manner the people and Sophia climbed the hillside. They kept in close company to avoid disturbance from the wild beasts and from the snakes. Snakes were most holy. They were the very children of the earth, moving freely through their mother's bosom, haunting the places of the dead. Some said they were the dead themselves and some their children.

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So their holiness was full of danger, and whenever a snake gleamed in the undergrowth or showed its head beside a stone, the women screamed and stamped and shook their rattles. But the youth Manthos bounded, after the snake and sought to catch it in his hands. Once, in a place where there were many serpents, he succeeded and jumped suddenly upon a rock, waving the grey-green, writhing body above his head and crying out in pleasure. Whereupon many of the women flung themselves upon the ground and tried to seize the holy creatures also and twine their coils about them. But Manthos went to them and held them in a certain manner—the same he used to quieten the frightened animals—and they lay still and presently revived and proceeded on their way. Snakes in that country were not venomous

By sundown they reached the pine-trees. The grove was full of red light and shadows and the scent of earth and violets and the sound of water, for on the edge of it a stream rushed out, seeming to leap out of the rock, and made a lake and rushed on again. In an open space beside the water they halted, and the youths, the bearers and servants of the tree, ran to the lake and plunged themselves into the water, and then, very solemnly, moving in a sort of dance, lifting their stone axes regularly, they felled the new tree, the holy thing that was to bring them strength and fruitfulness. As they hewed, the women went here and there gathering violets and little plants, and the rest of the people blew on their conchs and shook their rattles and shouted, making a loud noise.

So the new tree was cut and the people assembled once again and proceeded with it and with the old, withered tree, up the mountain. But now darkness

was come. They went by the light of torches, fearfully, and the holy bearers drooped their heads and groaned as though they bore a corpse through the dark night, through the threatening pine forest. Sophia walked before them, tossing her arms and crying most piteously, and all the women did the same, in mourning for the tree, and the music that the people made was full of terror and of sorrow. Still lamenting, they left the woods and came to the rocks and the bare, moonlit sky and to the cave that was the place of death and birth. Within were shadows and great shapes of stone, hanging from the roof; on the ground were smooth stones uncarved by man, rounded like the hill itself or like a woman's belly; and beyond were hidden vaults where water glistened. And while Sophia and her daughter and certain of the women went alone into the cave, the youths, turning the holy fire-drill, wood on wood, set fire to the old year's tree and burnt it, and in its ashes put up the new tree and began to dance about it, uttering loud cries. Their stone knives and axes were in their hands, and as they moved, first slowly, stepping round and round, then faster, their arms flung out, wagging their heads and spinning on their toes, they cut and hewed at each other, so that the dance was like a pursuit and like a battle. And still the musicians played and still the people wailed and shouted. In a great circle, to protect them from the wild beasts and from the spirits, fires burned.

Soon the youths' blows grew wilder. They struck at random, and sometimes it was not their neighbour's but their own bodies that they wounded, and sometimes, spinning and spinning, made drunk by fasting and the sight of blood and their own ecstasy, they

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would break away and run to the tree and dash themselves against it, seeking to die. But only one was needed. Presently he fell, the weakest of them, the first to be exhausted by dancing and the night's passion, and at once the others flung themselves upon him and tied him to the tree. For he was become the chosen of the pine-grove, its life. And while he was hanging there they led up the handsomest of the animals, and having put plants upon them and sprinkled grain upon their heads, that every living thing might share in this death and in the life that would arise from it, they killed them. And after that they threw knives and axes at the youth till he died. Whereupon they and all the people fell upon their faces.

Then Sophia and her maidens came and took the bodies and the knives and axes that had done the killing and went with them into the cave. They moved in silence. There was no sound save the small noises of the night. On the bare hillside the fires that the people had lit kept watch. And in the darkness of the cave Sophia performed her office, which was to smear the blood of the youth upon the holiest stone, a rounded stone that was like the mountain, and to put grain and spring flowers and scraps of the beasts' hides and fleeces on it, that all the life that had been set in the cave, womb of the mountain, might in due course rise up again and flourish. But the heart of the youth she took, and going again secretly into the night, she put it into a hole that she cut in the tree's flank, whispering certain words. And this also was a very holy moment. When it was passed she returned, and after a pit had been dug and what remained of the sacrifice had been buried in it, with all the weapons, for no

man could touch them now, she and her maidens also fell upon the ground and lay still, silently.

In the dawn they rose and left the cave. And Sophia stood before the new green tree, fresh as the green spring-time, and cried loudly, "It lives!" And the people woke, and the youths jumped up, and hastening to the tree, seized it joyfully and started to go down the hill, back to the pinewood. Once more they ran to the lake and plunged in, but this time with the tree itself, bathing it altogether in the running water. And the people, following, went also to be splashed with water and to press their lips and hands to the tree, wet and gleaming as it was, that its holiness, the new life that blood and death had given it, should flow into them. And when all had done this they lit fires and feasted.

All that day they revelled, eating and drinking and playing in the pine-grove. And when night came, made bold by the wine and the darkness, each man embraced a woman. Every rock, every fold in the ground, every twist in the pine-roots sheltered a couple. Only Sophia rested apart and alone, too weary to call a man to her, unstirred by the drinking or the season. Throughout the night she remained and stared at the patterns that the branches made against the moon-lit sky. Melitta lay not far from her. With the first light that brought brown and blue shadows to the grove and a pallor to the wine-stained, dishevelled people, Sophia saw her daughter and saw that she had chosen Manthos for her lover. The youth still slept, limp and inert, his hair and arms spread out where they had fallen. But Melitta was awake. She stretched herself and yawned and glanced about her. In her turn she saw her mother, lying there alone,

and the look of ease and relish that was in her eyes became a look of deep astonishment.

In the bright sunlight they left the forest. Once again the chosen number of youths carried the tree. It was to stand that year beside Sophia's hut, near to the spring from which she and her clan took water, and to her hearth, where burned, tended by her daughters, the common fire of her people. The other villages took boughs from it which their leaders carried, while the lesser folk plucked branches and twigs from lesser trees and wove them into garlands for their necks and waists and foreheads. The women were careful to put twigs that had many cones on them into their bosoms, for that was a means of getting children. Sophia was so tired that she could scarcely bear the garland's itch. She wore but one or two. The others had no such delicacy. They went enveloped in the thorny, fresh green needles; it seemed that the forest itself swarmed down the hill. Manthos was the liveliest. He had cut down a sapling for himself and jumped with it after the young women, crying a cry that was of the pine-trees. But he ran alone; for the first time since they had kissed and wrestled in their mother's lap, Hyacinthos was not with him.

CHAPTER II

So the spring came and the bursting of the flowers and the sprouting of the seed; and summer and the promise of harvest.

But for Sophia there was no summer. The days went by; the pods grew heavy and the fruit flushed; the bees sang beneath their loads. But Sophia knew that, for the first time since she had danced with the women, she was not about to have a child, and she became afraid. Secretly, hiding even from her youngest daughters, she ate the seeds of the sacred pomegranate, close-packed and life-giving. Alone in the night with her little sleeping children, she grasped the shells of a necklace that she had, pressing them to her one by one, and when this failed she crept out to a lonely place and killed a sow that was about to farrow and ate its heart raw, by the light of the full moon. At dawn she bathed in the sea, for no spirit of barrenness, she thought, could withstand sea water; and in the dawn also she sent her sons—those that still lived with her, being too young to go among the men and share their rites—to catch her fish. Her elder daughters and Melitta she had sent to another hut. The boys were easily deceived. They would not guess why she wanted to open the fish and eat the hard roes, as tight with eggs as ripening poppy-heads.

Yet she remained barren. The time came of the first gathering of the figs, a time of many rites and spells and very holy, especially for women. Of all fruits the fig was the best loved and the most likely

to give children. Solemnly the people went in procession to the wild trees, and Sophia, her outspread hands held high beneath her breasts, givers of plenty, walked before them. First of the women she plucked the branches, heavy with early fruit and with the blossoms of the second, true harvest, and carried them to the gardens and the orchards. First of the women she tied them and their rich burden to the tamer trees, that these, by the power of the spell, fig to fig, blossom to blossom, might multiply in number and in savour. Alone she killed the necessary victim and alone she drank from the largest tree the sap that was its milk and that the maidens drew for her ; then sat beneath its shade while the girls danced and fought and beat each other with the fruitful branches, hoping that they would thus acquire fruitfulness.

As she sat she thought, "This will take the evil from me." Yet no child was given her. Harvest came, the cutting of the barley, and then the true gathering of the figs and of the apples and all the other fruits. Garlanded and girdled with strings of figs and shells and smooth white pebbles, images of the moon, ruler of women, Sophia led the harvest dances. These, like the spring dances, were sorrowful. The people feared the anger of the crops. Plants, like men, must needs hate death and seek to avenge it. So the people wept, mourning for the spirits that they killed and crying to them to withhold punishment and to return after the winter. And Sophia led the weeping. With her companions she watched the young men cut the stalks, each youth vying with his neighbour that he might not be the last and reap the last sheaf. For in this final handful, the people said, the ghosts of the crops took refuge, and he who killed it must in his turn die

and be put into the ground again, for the next crop's sake. By Sophia's feet the mice that were in the fields ran out. Children caught them and carried them away in cages, for they too were precious and holy, essential spirits of the barley ; each year the people made of them a feast, eating their virtue piously. Doves fluttered about her hands. She fed them with the falling grain, knowing them for the true lords of the fields, their free, heavenly rulers.

And still she hoped and still she was afraid. She feared each look, she dreaded every female creature. Most especially she feared her daughter Melitta. It seemed to her that since their eyes had met in the pine-grove the girl had watched her curiously. And next to her mother she was the wisest of the women ; her spells were very potent. Of late, moreover, her air had taken on a boldness, Sophia thought, that was not usual, a pride that was greater than a girl's should be, more free than Sophia's had been at her age. And it was not well to be unlike other women. So, throughout the harvest ceremonies, Sophia turned from her daughter. As she led out the victim, he who had cut the last sheaf of barley, he upon whom the people put all the evil of the year that his fellows might go safe, she did not glance at Melitta ; as she and her companions fed him her hands avoided Melitta's hands, her body did not jostle Melitta's body.

For feed the youth she must, and side by side with Melitta and the other holy women. To him they gave the sacred first-fruits of the fields and orchards, that he might eat and absorb the living spirits, holy and dangerous, that were in them, leaving the harvest purified and safe for other men. Presently he would be stoned and burnt, and the half of his ashes, thrown

into the sea, would convey the holy spirits' danger altogether away. The other half, sprinkled on the fields, would restore to the earth their holy, life-giving virtue. For all holiness was twofold. So they gave him meal and figs and milk and honey. And they gave him women, any he wanted but especially virgins. In the newness of the girls was the same holiness, venerable yet very dangerous to men; and this also the youth, the sacred victim, took upon himself. While he feasted and revelled his fellows starved, and again they drank spring water and purged themselves lest some unknown abomination should lurk within. Then, being ready for their own feast, they fetched the youth, and in a high, rocky place above the sea, put on him all that remained of evil among them by stoning him. They stoned him for the ewes that had not lambed and for the sickly children and for the trees whose fruit was thin and for the holes in the rocks and the tree-trunks where no bees hived, and for the men who had not kept the law and for the childless women. And Sophia, standing far from her daughter, stoned him more vigorously than the rest. After they had put him in the fire, with plants and beasts and images, that all on the island might be purified, she leaped more wildly than her wildest companion about the flames, while some blew upon whistles and beat upon drums to increase the flames' and the dancers' ecstasy. And when the youth was burnt, she secretly took a handful of his ashes, a charm of cleansing and of life-giving, and smeared her breast with them and wiped it clean again, before casting them, in the people's name, upon the fields, into the purifying sea.

But at the feast that followed, the happiest in the year, when the men and women rejoiced in the summer

and the wealth that it had given them, she chose again to lie alone. Melitta embraced Manthos; she smiled and held him more readily than before. But Sophia was weary of men, weary of caresses. And every hour she grew more fearful; the year was waning, sowing-time was drawing near, and she knew that then, in the women's company, her emptiness would surely be discovered and she would be shamed before the people. For others might be barren without loss; her barrenness was every man's misfortune. In truth, life itself was threatened, for all things were linked, so she believed; to mar one holy thing was to check the stream through which all power, all well-being flowed, to break the mighty spell that held the world together. And still, above every one, she feared her daughter. There came a night when Melitta, by chance, visited her hut. Sophia was alone save for the sleeping children. And Melitta had scarcely looked on her mother than her eyes grew wide, she opened her lips to exclaim, but, for very haste perhaps, turned without exclaiming and fled away, clutching her belly in her hands lest the sterile thing that was in Sophia should leap upon her and possess her likewise. Sophia, left hiding in her hut, bit her hands and tore her hair. This was the deepest shame, that her fears should be accomplished, that Melitta, first, should have divined her ruin.

For a long while that night Sophia did not sleep. Terror pursued her, and now her heart cried out that some strange spell strangled her virtue, a ghost sent by an enemy, some younger woman, maybe, who envied her greatness; and now her thoughts ran from corner to corner of her mind, seeking what she had done or failed to do that her wisdom was thus rent, as a protecting wall is rent, allowing the alien power to

enter in and to destroy her. And with her the whole of her life. She thought: "It is Melitta's doing." And rising from her bed, she looked in the hut for a hide, a pot, some object that had been her daughter's and upon which, in the girl's absence, she could make a spell. But while she searched a surer way offered. She took a handful of meal and damped and kneaded it into a woman's shape, and saying, "This is my enemy," bound it tight with straw. One strand, big as the figure's head, she put about its mouth.

After that she slept, and in her sleep a new child visited her. She did not see its face, but its body was so warm, its weight so snug against her hip that, on awakening, she was filled with hope, and thinking, "I am free of Melitta," started out at once to seek for the unknown spirit that had thus, in the night, called to her. She did not know where it might be. Hastening lest any one should see her, she made her way up the hill to the first caves. Here in older times the people had lived, they said, and here the dead were buried. Snakes had their holes among the graves. If she saw a snake, she thought, that would be the child. On an upright stone within the largest cave's mouth she set a saucer of milk and figs and her most precious charm, which was a rounded hollow object, white and marked with sacred emblems, of a substance frailer than the frailest shell. A man had found it on the seashore and had brought it to her saying that it was a sea-serpent's egg. The dead, like the living, enjoyed food and gifts; and dwelling beneath the earth where plants give birth, they had, for good or evil, much knowledge of fertility. But the milk was not touched. No snake came.

All day she wandered, avoiding the homes of men.

Yet, though she stopped by every holy tree, sat beside every holy stream, peered long into the clefts that were so deep no light could penetrate them, no sign was given her, no bird touched her as it flew by, no water splashed of itself upon her hands, no leaf or fruit dropped into her bosom. And again she became very much afraid. The spell that had been, she was certain, put on her, weighed once more upon her body. She walked in a wood by the cliff's edge, and with every step she felt it, the abominable artifice, in the fever of her blood and the confusion of her mind. And once more her heart swelled with questions and she asked herself whether, being unrewarded, her wanderings were not evil. They were uncustomary, unhallowed; in truth, she had done many things that were not of the habit of her people; an impious freedom had possessed her; she was no longer as other women were. She glanced about her, and the thought leaped into her mind that there might be some stronger power than Melitta's in the bonds that held her. Since what she had done in the night had not broken it, a greater spell might be mingled with her daughter's, the spell of some potent rock or tree or stream, the wrath of some dead kinswoman, the awful anger of the holy mountain. And at this, horror put its hand before her eyes and closed her mouth. She raised her head to catch her breath again, and behold, what she had feared was true : all things were become threatening and terrible. Until this hour she had been part of them; the trees and the rocks, the winds above and waves below, the animals that moved in the undergrowth and the birds that flew their mysterious ways over her head had been her sisters and her brothers, her very self. But now she shivered, she cowered, for

they were enemies. She, the mother, the wisest, the most honoured, the most holy, was cut off from her children, impure, outcast, alone.

A branch snapped in the wood, and seized with panic terror, Sophia fled. The day was heavy; she fancied that she heard rumblings, signs of wrath, in the hills. Yet as she approached the village she went more quietly. For the first time she walked in shyness, fearing the crackling of a leaf equally with the first sharp look, the first sign of the people's condemnation. Near to her hut she saw again her daughter Melitta. The girl was standing by the spring, which made an unusually fine, deep pool and gave water to many neighbours besides Sophia's kinsmen. Her water jug was on her hip; the youth Hyacinthos was by her. And from the distance where she waited, thinking, "she will tell him," Sophia saw the young man take the jar and plunge it in the pool and hand it back again. He did not speak, but as Melitta lifted the jar and turned, he pulled from an oleander tree that leaned over the spring a handful of leaves, kept smooth and glossy by the water's freshness, and scattered them across her shoulders. Quickly Melitta brushed the leaves aside; had they been scorpions she would not have rid herself of them more rudely nor looked back at the youth, as she moved swiftly away, with greater indignation. He stood crestfallen. The sunlight and the shadows of the trees dappled his skin with gold and darkness.

Next day towards evening Sophia left her hut and went down into the plain. In the flat lands the young men were turning up the earth, preparing for the sowing. And Sophia walked by the fields that were not her kinsmen's. Not far from the village where Manthos

and Hyacinthos lived were many such fields, and above them were many orchards. The grass here and the leaves were green; on the pomegranate trees a few last fruit lingered, golden and red; the sea winds whispered among the branches. As she went by, the young men left their work and greeted her. They stared in awe and pleasure at such a strange and well-omened visit. And some held out the sticks they used for picking at the ground and some their own scarred fingers, that she might put virtue into them. Sophia, after she had touched them, went on towards the sea.

She returned the next day and the next until, on a certain evening, in the coolest of the orchards, she found the youth Hyacinthos. He was lying beneath a pomegranate tree, in sleep or sorrow. The sun was low; the grass on which the young man lay and his body and the leaves that drooped over his head were bright, and the stream that ran by shone like the new skin of a serpent. And it seemed to Sophia, as she drew near and he, hearing her step, raised himself upon his elbow, that it was the shadow of the pomegranate tree that moved, or that it was the very tree, green and golden in the autumn dullness, that, having lain itself to rest, awoke and greeted her. The garden was empty; the smell of fruit was in the air. And Sophia sat herself down in the scent and the quiet beside Hyacinthos and plucked a fruit from the tree above and gave him half of it and spoke his name quietly. At first the young man stared in awe and astonishment, as the young men in the fields had stared, but after she had spoken further his eyes took on a look that was between pleasure and disquiet. For what she asked of him was simple yet unfitting, and the

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dusk was falling over the garden. Yet pleasure prevailed and pride and the whispering of his heart, which told him there was nothing she could not give him, no object, no dignity, no luck, if she chose. To Sophia, as she closed her arms about him, it was not only Hyacinthos, the young man, that she held, but the pomegranate tree and the garden and the rich blue sea beyond.

CHAPTER III

In this way Sophia made her atonement and became again as other women were.

Yet because of what she had done that day in the orchard many things were changed in her heart and in the hearts of all the women of the island. For when Sophia knew that her desire was fulfilled, her emptiness made whole, when the truth that her stirred pulses had foretold to her as she watched Hyacinthos and Melitta by the well was clearly manifest, she made haste to call the holy women together and to tell them of the prodigy. The time of the sowing festival was come. At this dread hour all wisdom, new and old, was needed. And here, indeed, was a powerful thing, a great mystery.

The women's meeting place was in the hills, a stretch of ground arid as winter, where there was water in a hole among the rocks but no green thing. Walls of stone screened it, and on one side was a deep chasm. And in this lawful, hidden place, at this fitting hour, Sophia revealed the secret she had learnt concerning man, and how there was a virtue in him akin to that of the pine-trees and of the holy mountain and of woman, and how the love that had been judged so frivolous was in truth a spell of mighty potency. Naked in the centre of the meeting-place, she danced the new mystery, the new spell that would, more surely than before, make her and her fellows and the earth fruitful. And as the women watched her, as they saw her, after she had ended the new dance, dance the older spells that were due at this season, the pains of child-

bed and the drinking of the soothing gruel—which also she had taught them—and the birth and the triumph, so that the meaning of the mystery was altogether clear, they were amazed. “Oh! Oh! Oh!” they cried, gaping their mouths and jigging with their hands and feet. “Oh! Oh! Oh!” they cried again, and those of them who were filled at times with a holy frenzy, fell and rolled upon the ground. The air was loud with their wonder. The rocks echoed the noise. All the valley was astonished.

None doubted, or if some did they did not say so. When the wildness was quieted the women crowded round Sophia. They called her wise and holy; they made ready to perform the ceremonies that were usual when any new matter was revealed, with excellent good will. For these, victims were needed; the sucking pigs that had been brought for the sowing rites would do. For pigs were plentiful upon the island and were very holy. Their blood was purgative; no other animal bore so many young at one birth. So pigs were taken, and Sophia killed a score of them. And to Melitta, first, she gave the first pig and spattered her face and bosom with its blood so that she, made one with the pig, would be given to death as it was given to death if she told any man of what had been disclosed to her that day. The girl held the carcase reverently, and her neighbour and her neighbour’s neighbour did the same until all were bound to secrecy. And after a pit had been dug, Sophia made Melitta put the carcasses in the earth, so that the girl looked longer than the others into the hole and at its contents.

When this was done the holy women proceeded with their rites, the awful and blessed rites of sowing.

They brought to them, that year, an added fervour. The new spell that Sophia had revealed and which she had most truly performed with Hyacinthos in the orchard, promised an increased power in the earth that autumn and an increased wealth in the spring-time. For what she had done, they said, had been done for all the nubile women of the island. In her, the wise mother, as she lay beneath the pomegranate tree, each one of them had been incarnate, besides the parched earth and the unyielding sea, the abandoned nests, the empty trees and every stream and wood and meadow where life, in these arid months, ran dry. Next year, in every future year, the spell would be performed anew. The holy marriage that Sophia and Hyacinthos had acted alone and secretly would be made part of the established rites. And, following a plan that Sophia had in her heart devised, no man would be aware of it, no man would guess at any change. All unknown to him, man's virtue would be used, his strange power taken and made partaker in the holy mysteries.

But in the meantime Sophia was pregnant, Sophia's powers were enough. The women went about their grim business serenely, happily. And all the while Sophia put Melitta first. Throughout the ceremonies she thrust her forward, declaring by her gestures that she bestowed upon her new-grown daughter the larger share in those sacred duties and dignities that till now had been wholly hers. And if Melitta was astonished her astonishment soon passed. Pride lifted her head and stiffened her shoulders. Beside her mother she sat upon the ground and mourned, even as the earth mourned its bright beauty and the golden days. Beside Sophia she flung stones and fierce words at her companions, who did the same to her, that the

evil spirits that yet lingered among them might fly in terror. Beside Sophia she set out the pinewood torches, the baskets in which were pine-cones and branches and forms of women made of barley-meal and chalk, ancient signs, and the forms of men that Sophia had fashioned for the first time, also of paste, familiar objects, strange new symbols. Beside Sophia she fasted. All the women at the assembly starved and were pure. Certain of them had not touched a man for many days, for the weakness that follows love, they said, was a sign that loving took virtue from them, and their utmost power was needed for the dread sowing festival. Sophia was one of these always, and this year Melitta was also of their chaste company. Second only to her mother, after the victim had been killed and those that had done the killing had fled swiftly to the sea, she went down into the chasm, at night-time by the light of torches, with the flesh and the pigs and the pine-cones and the images, new and old, to give food and life to the hungry earth. Black shadows covered the descent. In the sky a full moon shone, yet the narrow chasm was altogether dark. The torches' light jerked here and there as the women stepped and slid from stone to stone, and now a face showed, with loose hair hanging about it, and now a rock, made strange by the sudden flickering. Somewhere water trickled, and at times Melitta heard a snake's hiss. For snakes lived in the darkness; the women clapped their hands to frighten them away. And as they reached the cavern, the stinking place where the new food was laid down and from which the rotten fragments of the year before were taken up, Sophia made Melitta go first into the unknown dark that seemed to move and murmur.

At the women's secret feast the honours that Sophia had put upon her daughter were confirmed. The time of gloom was past. Melitta and Sophia leading them, the holy women had gone in procession to the fields, had buried the flesh with the year's seed, had poured out water, which they had carried in big jars from their meeting-place. And now with the happy world they feasted. The taste of cakes and honey moistened their tongues; they sniffed the savour of fish and wine. They rejoiced and were lavish in food and words and gesture, even as the sky would lavish rain upon their labours, and the earth, rejoicing in the meats that they had given to it, would lavish its rewards on them in its hour. Always at this time speech was free with a freedom unknown at other seasons; the women cracked jokes and asked each other questions which to a man would have been but ribaldry and nonsense, but which to them were truth itself. Laughing they praised each other's fruitfulness; mirthfully they indicated whence, if children died, children could be got again. This year their jests had an added liveliness; the new symbols that lay with the older symbols among the cakes before them, were a source of new and abundant merriment. But before understanding and appetite were together dulled Sophia took one of the female images, and having pressed it to her, gave it to Melitta. She also took a string of figs and put it on her daughter and bade the assembly see in her the holiest of the young women. The others nodded their heads. "You are good," they said. "You are wise." And Sophia told them it was not her will in future to bear many children. "I am old," she said, and the women agreed that it was time a younger woman led the dances. So Melitta sat, not in her

mother's place, for Sophia was still the wisest, but just below it, and the feast proceeded.

So Melitta became leader of the women. Yet she did not dance that year at the winter or the spring festivals. During the dark months she remained hidden, and with the coming of the first crocuses she gave birth to a daughter. The wise women of the villages came to watch her delivery, to see that everything was in order, the child healthy and the mother as she should be. Sophia was there also, most potent of them all. She administered the holy draught and held her daughter by the armpits. Some while before she had loosened the bands that bound Melitta's image; her powers were restored, she no longer feared enchantment. And the women praised Melitta, pronouncing her a worthy offspring of her mother and of that line of women that had issued from the holy mountain or the sea. And Melitta, putting the child to her breast, praised herself also, in that her spells, which could not go awry she said, had given her a daughter, as she had intended. And presently she arose and washed herself and burnt what should be burnt in purifying fire and preserved what should be preserved in a stone pot, and went about her business.

But the freedom that had come upon her in the pine-grove, in the moment she had seen Sophia lying there, alone and free, did not leave Melitta. Her pride was greater than her mother's. More boldly than Sophia she departed from the ways of her people. Often in the summer, at dawn or evening, she would go with her daughter to the seashore and dance the child in the waves, which was a new thing, or set it to swim in a coracle that she had made of reeds,

swimming alone beside it. Nor did she go for this purpose to the part of the shore where her own kinsmen kept their boats, Sophia's brother, the ruler of their clan, and his nephews and cousins. Rather she went to the river mouth where Manthos and his people assembled. At this season the soft winds blew and the fishermen went more bravely over the waves. Commonly they travelled only so far as the eye could see, but from time to time they ventured further, going beneath their square sails to another island and bringing back with them news of men and ways that were a little different from their own and cargoes of flaked stone, and sometimes the strangers themselves, rare and curious visitors. And Melitta liked to watch the boats, and when her sisters asked her why she liked to go among alien clansmen she said, "Manthos is the boldest. His gifts are better."

The young men greeted her humbly, as they had greeted her mother in the fields. All but Hyacinthos, who hung his head, and Manthos, who had no fear of women. At evening when his fishing or his travelling were over, he would talk to her and show her any queer thing that he had caught or carried with him from the neighbouring island; and he would pinch her then, or slap her, and instead of laying the gifts he sometimes brought at her feet, would toss them, laughing, into her lap, sponges and shells and flowers of pink stone that the divers plucked from under the water. Once at sunset when she had thus come down to watch the landing, he bounded from his boat and ran to her and snatched her child from her arms and swung it high in the air. She stood a little apart, upon a high rock facing the sea. The sunlight sped across the waves; the rocks and Melitta and the smooth river

that flowed out at this place were red with it. And though Melitta was afraid when she saw the child flying, she laughed when it was in her hands again, for she saw that it was not frightened. And Manthos laughed uproariously. But his companions stared at him, aghast at the blasphemy; and Melitta knew that this singular gesture that he had made and his laughter and his insolence, that seemed to say that he, in his own eyes, was different from them, above and better maybe, stirred in them alarm and anger.

At another time she saw him do a yet bolder thing. His insolence was strange; he had as little fear of ghosts and monsters as of the holiness of wise women and of unweaned babes. In a certain part of the coast was a little bay. It was a sea of miracles; shoals of fish swam to it of themselves in their season, without the need of spells or bait. The fishermen had but to set their nets and draw them up next day, and the fish shone on the ground as bright and plentiful as poplar leaves after a summer storm. That morning Manthos and half a score of his brethren were hauling up a net. It seemed that it was held under the water, and thinking that a corner of it was gripped by rocks, one of the men dived to release it. But he did not return, and Melitta, watching on the shore, heard Manthos cry, "He is caught! The serpent has him!" His companions trembled and groaned, in fear of the octopus and dismay at the loss of their net and of their catch. But Manthos, while the others shrieked in terror, put his knife between his teeth and dived quickly and ripped the belly of the beast and brought up the man. At the sight of him bearing his companion to the rocks, the others gave a yet louder shriek and fled, for to touch a half-drowned man was as unlucky

as to touch death, and to save him was a sacrilege and an abomination, a vile insulting of the spirits of the sea. Yet Manthos was not afraid. He held the man up and poured the water from him as from a pitcher; he pressed and squeezed him as though he were a sponge. And presently Melitta, who had drawn back, came forward, driven by curiosity, and Manthos said, "Do as I do," and together they chafed the man's hands and feet and warmed his body. And Manthos put his mouth to the other's mouth and blew his own life into him, and the spell of the waters was broken and he revived. After that, for a long while, the people looked askance at Manthos, saying, "No good will come to him." And while Melitta praised him in her heart, thinking, "He is unlike other men. The spirit in him is stronger than theirs," she hated his boldness also. For if he displayed it in all manner of ways he displayed it especially with women. He was an ingenious leader, full of wiles; he was lecherous as a coney.

The days of harvest had returned. Now again the fields were cut, the orchards emptied, now again Sophia and Melitta took the living, dangerous spirits of the first-fruits and gave them to the holy youth, the yearly victim. This was the hour for which, since she had discovered the spell that was in man and love, Sophia had been waiting, for it was in this hour that man's strange power, his newly-found spell, could be woven securely, profitably, into the ceremonies. Always, to the youth who was about to die, women, young virgins, were offered, that he might take into himself their sacred danger and so, for that year, make all their kind safe, like the harvest, for other men. Little was required to give the ancient rite its new, needful

significance. A word here, a gesture there, spoken and made while the youth lay alone among his brides, while all the other men were busy with their starvings and purgations, and the loves of the chosen victim became a holy wedding. And so Sophia stood before the youth and performed her office. She used a stone and divers other symbols to represent the earth whom the youth fertilised, the fruits, the woods, the corn. In this manner the male power was taken and conferred, through Sophia's symbols and through the girls whom the youth possessed, upon all the women of the land and upon the fields and gardens, streams and seas and woods, even as it had been taken the year before from Hyacinthos and conferred on them through Sophia. And Melitta, standing by with the priestesses, watched her mother and heard her words, learning the new ceremony. At that harvesting she had led the dances, celebrated every rite save this one. After it was over, she it was who ran out from the marriage chamber and announced to the elders and the people that the secret purifications had been made, that the youth was ready for death and they were fitted for their final cleansing and revelry. At the feast, directly the first cup was drunk, the first cake eaten, her eyes sought Manthos. But he was already in another woman's arms. She saw that his love, on this occasion, was a new girl, a maid such as she had been.

And now Melitta was flushed with an anger that no women had yet known and that, with her consuming pride, possessed her altogether. Now she, in her turn, sat within her hut with clay and shells and strands of straw, seeking to bring Manthos to her, or at least to bind him so that he would be disabled for every other woman. Her rage, her freedom, suggested all manner

of new spells. Her sisters observed her with curiosity, marked her closely, that they might do the same on like occasion. The revelation that Sophia had made had wakened a new concern for men and their loving. Sophia visited her with her infant son. She praised Melitta's cleverness. "I will help you," she said, and together they brewed from the new fruit a new sweet wine, and Melitta put a fig in it from her sacred necklace and took it down at evening to the boats. "Give some also to Hyacinthos," her mother had said, and Melitta did so. Indeed she offered the wine to him first before he had time to turn away. And the young man drank greedily, staring at her over the rim of the pot. Manthos looked on amazed. "Give it to me," he said and snatched the pot away. Melitta was glad to see him angered and her heart praised Sophia's wisdom. But though he grasped her by the waist that night, the next he took a woman from a far fishing village.

Throughout the hot months Melitta burned with anger and with jealousy, was cooled for a while by her lover's care and brought to flame again by his inconstancy. Summer passed. In the plains the autumn breezes blew the dry earth from the crests of the furrows, like spray from waves; in the hills the new-horned deer called to the youths and the young women to leave the fields, to take their arrows and their snares and to go hunting. But although Melitta, slipping through the woods with her lover, was at pains to show him that she was of all women the most adroit and nimble, although she made him nets that were better than those of any other hunter, she could not hold his many-faced desire.

One day while they and their companions were on

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the hillside, on their way home from hunting, she challenged all of them to race with her. She knew that despite her motherhood she was still fleetest than the fleetest maiden and that Manthos was fleetest of the men. Away she sped, over the rocks, the springy turf. "Heiha!" she cried, and "Heiha!" the hills answered, echoing her cry and the cry of those that ran with her. Soon she was ahead of all the women. Holding her breasts she ran, a shadow now among the shadows of the chestnut trees, half-bare of leaves and smelling of autumn. And Manthos and Hyacinthos, first of the men, sped after her. But although Manthos caught her beneath the tree where she leaned at last, sweating and breathless, he jumped away to pursue another woman; and in the shadows, with anger and with shame, she turned to Hyacinthos.

CHAPTER IV

After Hyacinthos had lain with Melitta beneath the chestnut tree he was filled with vanity. Save his brother, Manthos, no man in the valley was so proud. Melitta showed him no further kindness; she went her way, sullen and brooding and altogether chaste. But he no longer moped or sighed, no longer pursued her. He walked boldly now, holding his head high. And if Melitta was cold, so were not the other women. They raised their eyes to him reverently; despite themselves they bowed before the male spell, the new holiness. The older women, where they could do so without discovery, stole the clippings from his hair and nails, the objects he had touched, and hid them in their grain-jars, or in the orchards or the gardens; the young girls sought his kisses. But he gave no thought to them or to love. His heart, satisfied with the possession of its first desire, was fixed on other things. The only woman to whom he paid heed was Sophia. Often, as the year waned, he brought her gifts. Her power, he thought, had given him his wish; her power could give him all he coveted.

He spent much time, in the days that followed the sowing, wandering about the island. From the tops of hills, from the cliffs above the sea, he watched the sky. At night, too, he would go out to see the stars, to mark how the moon swam among the cloudrifts. He had uncommon wisdom in these matters. He could make rain fall, the people said, and breezes blow; no fisher-

man or sailor of his clan would go to sea till Hyacinthos had read the signs and given him a fair wind, a pig's bladder filled with his breath, or a stone wrapped in skin over which he had hummed and whistled. Sometimes in these nightly roving he caught sight of the women as they went about their holy work. It was at the new moon that certain herbs and roots were gathered, certain spells made. With the swelling of the moon they would swell and prosper. Other affairs required the full light to give them fullness. There was, again, a pebble that the women sought only at the moon's increase, between the crescent and the half. It shone softly, white and clear, and having washed it in honey-wine, they drank its milk, they said, to increase their own milk. By night-time also, from the sides of cliffs or clefts, they took the white chalk with which, crushed and mingled with barley-meal, they made their holy images, and which they laid, a very vigorous spell, on the bean-fields whose flowers had become scarce or whose stalks straggled. But Hyacinthos did not pause to spy upon the women; his mind was not on milk-charms, or on herbs, or food, or any earthy substance.

He dreamed of storms and thunder, of spells more exalted than any woman's. It happened that year, as Hyacinthos had foreseen, although he had said nothing of it, that the winter rains were slow in coming. The island needed rain less than many other lands; the springs were rich, and at the end of winter the melted snow swept down the mountains plentifully. Yet without rain the people would be poor and hungry. The holy women were aghast; the elders wagged their chins, asking what had been done or left undone that the clouds were dry. The year when they had behaved

in this way was so long past that no man recalled it. And Hyacinthos went to Sophia to confer with her. Already his kinsmen looked at him askance and murmured among themselves. Presently, maybe, if the drought continued, they would torture and kill him, that his abundant tears and blood might provoke the flood that his natural powers had not given them. Such was the ancient custom. Yet, as he stood before her on the threshold of her hut, beneath the holy pine-tree, Sophia saw that he was not afraid. She herself was frightened, though she knew that no man would dare to kill the mother of the people. Her wisdom was at fault. She had done what was usual. At the sowing festival the sacred jars had been duly filled from the women's holy well; after the seed had been given to the ground the water had been lawfully poured out. And lately she had made many other spells. Yet no rain fell. She greeted Hyacinthos with respect and eagerness. They sat for a long while together. And every moment, as the meaning of their conversation became clearer, Melitta, sitting beside them, became more angry. Above their heads the high white clouds floated; the twigs and needles of the withering pine-tree crackled and fell.

The next day Hyacinthos went up into the mountain to fetch rain. His kinsmen and Sophia's spread the news, and at once the people left their business, which was not very great at that moment, and sat themselves down outside their huts with little pots and pitchers from which, from time to time, they sucked water and spat it out again, to encourage the holy work. But the elders and the wise women, with the kinsmen of Sophia and Hyacinthos, assembled in a grove of sacred trees beside the river, doing all that custom and

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Hyacinthos bade them. For three days they waited, and Manthos killed many goats, fat and black as pregnant clouds; and Sophia's children and the younger cousins of Hyacinthos and Manthos bathed often in the river. The sky remained blue, the sun shone. But on the fourth day at dawn a wind sprang up, and Hyacinthos, waiting in the hills, said, "It is as I foresaw. It is as I ordained." Clouds appeared in the west, one, thin and slow, then another and another, moving faster.

In the grove the weary people started to their feet. At first the clouds were grey, but as they drew nearer to the island, to the mountains, they joined together and darkened till they were as fat as the slaughtered goats, black as their fleeces. And presently a noise was heard coming from the direction of the hills, a booming and a rattling as of thunder, but very small. And the people turned and saw Hyacinthos bounding towards them. His face and body were painted black, like the black rain; in his right hand he carried an instrument that he whirled above his head, which made the booming, roaring noise, and in his left hand was another instrument that rattled. With his wide-open mouth he howled as the gales howl. And seeing his wild face, his hair tangled like wind-tossed branches, the streaks of sweat and paint that poured from his body, hearing his wintry howlings, the people jerked themselves up and down and screamed likewise. He ran, and the clouds sped towards the mountains. Now he was in the grove among the screaming people; half the sky was overcast; a wan light spread beneath the trees. He leaped into the air, he shrieked, he fell upon the ground. He lay still, and the people were quieted. And in the silence the clouds struck against the hills

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and a crash of thunder sounded; still far away, scarcely to be heard, came a pattering of water. Hyacinthos raised his head. Between the smears of paint his skin was pale; he stared and panted, as though in fear. He listened, and behold his face flushed and tears streamed from his eyes. The people wept to see him, and because weeping helped the rain to fall.

After that, next to Sophia, no one was as famous in the valley as Hyacinthos. The elders and the wise women bowed before the spells that showed his uncommon wisdom, that had given rain so quickly and with such fulness. For the delayed storms broke violently; for many days water poured from the heavens. The men and women made him rich presents; the young girls kissed his hands openly. Only Melitta turned from his path, hating him. But the vanity of Hyacinthos was grown so fat that he did not heed her bitterness. He was become altogether proud, so proud that he no longer worked, no longer played or sported with his kinsmen. He lived upon the gifts the people offered and passed the hours communing with the sky, they said, at times upon the threshold of his hut, at times in the deep clefts whence he could see the stars by day-time.

But he made many true prophecies, ordained many useful things, and the people loved him. They gave him the first place, even before Sophia, at the winter festival when the men and women ran over the mountain and about the holy cave, shaking their torches, frenzied, howling; when the sacred babes were killed and the dancing warriors fought and feasted. This was the holiest time of all. Out of the battle of the warriors, who were the spirits of the darkness and of

the light, out of the victory of the bright men over the dark, the very brightness of the world was re-created. The warriors of the night and winter were painted in dark colours, but the warriors of the new dawn had covered their bodies with white chalk, the same that the women used in their ceremonies, a divine substance, nourishing of virtue, expulsive of evil. For at this time they were of the day and sunshine. They were the babe's new life that they had eaten, absorbing its virtue, becoming one with it, and they were the sun that they were about to bring to life out of the cave; and they were the cave itself, the earth, the mountain—all were one. By the power of their white bodies, by their conquest of the dark, by the power of their leaping and of their torches and of the blood they drank and spilt, they sought to make the new day arise and also to make the hidden fire—which likewise was the babe, the sun, the divinity—leap from the mountain. The flashing of the hidden fire did not occur each year; it was a rare, unpredictable event. And because it chanced that year that the prodigy appeared—flames burst indeed from the highest cave—Hyacinthos, the new leader, was given honours such as no man had received before. To him, instead of to Sophia, the heart of the dead child was given; they made him first, not only of his own clan, but of all the young men of the valley. At this Manthos frowned a little and looked sideways at his brother, and Melitta bit her thumbs with rage.

Her anger, the hatred she had conceived for Hyacinthos after she had taken him in place of Manthos, after Sophia had bargained with him before the rain-getting, grew with every honour paid to him. Her heat was not for her own humbling nor her

mother's, it was all for Manthos. She was enraged that Hyacinthos should have become, save in the one matter of caressing women, more insolent than his brother, and that this insolence should receive such homage. The men had made Hyacinthos leader. In the late winter Sophia, fulfilling the bargain she had made beneath the pine-tree, conferred on him a yet greater, a supreme, honour. She gave him a share in the women's sacred mysteries; he was consecrated priest of the year's sowing.

The change came about in this manner. On a certain morning, in her hut above the plains, one of the women who were seized at times with a holy frenzy began to cry out and to prophesy. "Barley! Barley!" she cried. Her voice was a man's voice; her body writhed, her face twisted with the bursting words, the violence of the spirit calling its name. Now it chanced that Sophia was with the woman at the time. For several days preceding that day she had visited her, and they had sat together and drunk of the wine that Sophia had brought. So it was Sophia who first heard the woman's cries and knew their meaning. For indeed the words were strangled, indistinct, had more in them of empty noise than speech. And at once she called her daughters to her and sent her boy sons running through the land to warn the wise women and the elders and bid them come at once and see and hear the revelation. The older of her daughters stood by with Melitta. And as the girls watched the seeress twist and writhe, the spirit entered into them also. A madness broke over them—all save Melitta who remained unmoved and sullen—and they too fell to prophesying. When Sophia's brother, the nearest of the neighbouring chiefs, came to the door, he found

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the hut full of shrieking girls. Sophia and Melitta alone were quiet. Yet the girls did not contort their faces or their bodies; their eyes were not rolled upward. They tossed their hair and arms, and it was in their own voices that they shouted shrilly, "Hyacinthos! Hyacinthos!"

In awe and fear the people gathered about the hut. Many came that were not summoned. Upon the edge of the assembly young boys pushed and gaped, and some went pale and were smitten with trembling, although they could not see the dreadful woman as she rolled and scrambled on the ground and dug her nails into it and into her flesh. But the wise women and the elders saw. And after they were convinced that the spirit of the barley was in the woman, Sophia told them its bidding, which was that Hyacinthos, the greatest of rain-makers, should become the barley's priest, its holiest magician. In future he would go with the women to the fields at sowing; uttering his spells, he would pour out the water; in all but the most secret rites he would have a place. And the old men nodded, for indeed the barley was become a mighty food, and every year, with more fields ploughed and better tools for cutting and threshing and winnowing, and better jars and means of hoarding it, became a mightier, so that it might well need especial care, an especial minister. Moreover, the exaltation of one of them reflected honour upon all their sex. The wise women, too, accepted the revelation, revering the divinity that was in the seeress and Sophia's wisdom and the glory of the male's secret spell and the manifest greatness of Hyacinthos. And Melitta, alone among so many, dared not speak.

So Hyacinthos became the barley's rain-maker. Lest

his new functions should lead him to discover hidden things, the women took him to their meeting-place and bound him to silence. Upon a cold, dark night, while the wind blew and the rain fell, they put a covering upon his eyes and let him down with ropes into the chasm. Swung by the wind and the women's uncertain hands, he entered the cavern where the flesh and the carcasses of many pigs lay, gnawed by wild beasts and serpents, shrunken, rotting. And when he returned, sickened and cold, his nose foul with the smell of death, Melitta washed him in the blood of a goat and poured the blood into the ground and buried the goat's body, that Hyacinthos might bleed and stifle in the earth if, by chance, he saw the women's secrets and betrayed them. And all the while she held the rope, besmeared the oath, crushed down the victim, she thought: "If it were Manthos."

Her hatred now was full-boned, full-fleshed, a monster not to be withstood. It was fed by hatred also of Sophia, who had crowned her enemy's triumph, and anger with herself who had set him on his road, and scorn of the herding women and the cringing men, and of Manthos, who was to Hyacinthos as the pine-tree to the fir and yet had let the other conquer. At the spring feast, casting away pride, she called Manthos to her, and wild anger mingled on her lips and hands as she caressed him, and afterwards while she spat taunts and sneers at his humility. "Ho! the great Manthos!" she said. "He rules clay and beasts and women. But his brother rules mountains. Ho! Manthos! Where is he, the great magician? I cannot see him. Hey! He is in the water, the little fish. He is in the grass, the little jumping flea." Manthos was sullen. In the warm pine-grove Hyacinthos lay alone,

apart from the revelling people, even as Sophia had done and did again to-night, for her labours among men and children were over. And Manthos frowned, for it was true, as Melitta had guessed, that his brother's exaltation, greater than any man's had ever been, angered him. It was his heart, half-turning from his twin's love, that had turned his glance sideways when Hyacinthos was made chief, that weighed in envy at this moment on his mouth and brow. "Manthos rolls with the virgins. He is a sturdy lion. But Hyacinthos is bigger than the forest. He caught Melitta in the race. Now he is above all women and all men." So Melitta lied, and Manthos, seeing the falsehood, answered her. "I can make figures that are men and animals," he said. "True spirits. I can call the herds off the hills with a single cry. With a single cry I can send them back again. It was not you who raised Hyacinthos up. It was his own power that commands the rain. And Sophia's choice. I could have done the same. I could have done better. I am greater than Hyacinthos. My spells are stronger." "Yes," said Melitta. "And my spells are stronger than Sophia's."

She gazed at him, and he was puzzled, her look had grown so dark, so urgent. But he could not understand her words, which were more lies, he thought, bred of her female's wish to keep him from other females and of her holy woman's envy of Hyacinthos, the new priest. He laughed in answer, and Melitta became wild again and tore at him with her hands; and he, knowing no better spell to soothe a furious woman, held and kissed her. But through the night her anger burnt with her love, one flame, and in the morning after they had slept and during all the homeward journey, she mocked and taunted him. She came

behind him as they ran and danced, and pointed to Hyacinthos, the chief of chiefs, walking ahead of the procession, before the holy tree. "Look, look," she whispered. "See where the star-gazer goes. Up! Up! Up! Up!" And again, "You will not lead the spirit to your village, first of all men. You will not dance with the women at the sowing." He shrugged his shoulders, for her words pricked him like flies. And his contempt so whipped her rage that prudence was forgotten, and custom that is stronger than fear, and the dread of punishment and the thought of death. "If you would hear me I could give you wisdom," she said. "You would be greater than Hyacinthos."

CHAPTER V

When she had spoken her heart gave a great knock. She started away from him and for the remainder of the journey walked by Sophia, quietly. Within her, struck blind and dumb with terror, her spirit raced towards her home, the security of familiar pots and baskets, of the old crone who, in her absence, watched the hearth, of her sleeping daughter. So from the hills the swine and the goats at times fled down, flying from the forest noises, strange wild cries, nameless groanings, the hunting calls, the people said, of wild and hungry ghosts.

But Melitta, when at last she rested in her hut, recognised her fear. The power that had clutched her throat, jumped in her breast, came from the women's meeting place. She had been ready to betray the new dread mystery, to give to Manthos knowledge of the holy spell that was in man, and so the spirits of the chasm had awakened, the snakes and the foul darkness and the blood of victims and the heavy earth that buried them. Quickly they had come to warn her, threaten her, bid her remember that the victims were herself, that theirs would be her death, if she broke faith. Trembling, drenched with sweat, she crouched beside her fire and her child, her knees pressed to her chin, crushing her body in her arms as though it were the secret that might escape her.

In a little while her terror passed. The visions that haunted her became dim, and she no longer saw clearly in the quiet of her hut the flames and shadows and

killings of the sowing-rites and the oath-taking, nor the monstrous creatures with which her fancy peopled the scene. They had seemed as real to her as the spindle on which she twined her thread, or the long basket in which, at harvest, she winnowed grain and in which, now, her daughter lay cradled. Yet, though these things faded, though she could draw breath without feeling the pressure of the earth upon her ribs, without smelling the cave's stench, she remained wary. When next she saw Manthos she lowered her eyes, pinched her lips. She made herself garlands of verbenas and, in silence as she passed him by, pressed their chaste leaves to her side, to save herself from him and from love, which also was a strong demon, she thought, a compelling spirit that of its own power loosened limbs and lips and hearts.

But Manthos eyed her curiously. Each time they met his look scanned her look that had grown timid, her mouth that remained strangely still, her hands that had been so quick to open and to seize him and that were now so obstinately closed. As the days went by and she, bound by her new caution, still drew away from him, he went towards her. And always he asked her, in jeering or in tenderness, in laughter or reproach, what was the wisdom she had offered him and that would make him greater than Hyacinthos. With increasing keenness he watched her turn this way and that before his questions. On the day when, hanging her head, she answered that, in truth, she had no rare wisdom, her words in the pine forest had been but falsehood and boasting, he knew she lied, and his pulse beat fast with excitement and the foretaste of knowledge.

Yet that day he did not pursue her further. He was

cunning, and making as though he believed her denial, laughed and turned away. Thereafter, for a while, he avoided her, even as she had, since the spring feast, avoided him; and Melitta's fear was lulled and her heart once more made bitter with longing for his presence and anger at his neglect. This was an idle season. Winter was forgotten, summer not yet come; in the interval was leisure, while the flowers bloomed, yellow and red and blue and purple. The smell of the bean-blossom possessed the land, a sweet, wild spirit, breeding madness, the people said. And Melitta left her daughter and her loom and roamed through the valley. Her feet were restless, she was faint with the scent of flowers. So she wandered, until one evening she again met Manthos, in a place beside the river, near to the sea and to the largest harbour where the people often gathered to sport or gossip or, in the sailing months, to barter fruit and grain for the seamen's wares. Manthos, with a band of young men and women, had been playing in the open meadow. His companions still sported, throwing their lances and their knives, wrestling, boxing. The girls fought sturdily. They were naked like the men; her heavy skirt irked Melitta. But seeing her, Manthos had come to her side. He stood by her at the water's edge. Beneath the trees a group of elders rested. Sophia was not among them. And that day Melitta could not let him go. Envy of the racing, tumbling girls pinched her; the slow spring hours, empty of work and love, lay heavy on her senses. "Come to the orchards," Manthos said, and she followed him. His voice was a web more certain than the hunting-net that a young man cast over a runner, more penetrating than the smell of the bean-blossom. It wrapped her in a happy

stupor, and as she went towards the flowering trees, as they lay down among the petals, her drowsiness grew and grew while Manthos whispered of the long days that had gone by since he had held her, and of his need of her and of her kindness to him, greater than any woman's. By these ways his words crept towards her and towards what she hid from him. And Melitta was so bemused by the sound of them and by the comfort of his presence that she did not heed their gradual approach, or heeding it was careless of its menace.

Her fears had vanished. Cast out, it seemed, by other, stronger ghosts, the furies of the chasm had departed. She rested by his side and this was safety; he spoke and clasped her, and there was no truth but in him. And although, when presently Manthos began to question her, the memory of her alarms returned and she saw again the spirits' hideous shapes, recalled the horror of their first coming, such thoughts had no substance, no reality. Still Manthos whispered. His words painted a picture that she had often painted in her own mind—herself and Manthos, with wisdom and power shared between them, ruling the people; herself and Manthos, richer and happier than man and woman had ever been. She was caught in a spell greater than the women's mysteries; to yield to it and to him was a law more urgent than the laws of blood. She held back a moment longer. He said, "Give me the wisdom that you promised me," and she answered, "I am afraid to give it to you, lest I die." "I have done many things," said Manthos, "that should bring death. My kinsmen hate me for it sometimes. Yet I am not afraid. Often, I think, the spirits forget their anger. Or maybe they are asleep. Or maybe dead.

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All creatures die. But wisdom is good." So she told him.

She was amazed, when she had finished speaking, to see him leap wildly to his feet. His head was flung back as though he were about to laugh. In fact, he uttered a cry, but though it rang happily it was not his wonted laughter. Melitta stared at him. She had revealed the mystery as best she knew it, telling him of the spell that was in man, the holy virtue, lively as the virtue of the pine-trees and the figs and of all the other powerful things and creatures, and that made him, even as they were, a maker of men. And he had listened in silence, without moving. The dusk, which was cooler than the dusk that had covered Sophia and Hyacinthos, gathered about them, so that she could not see his face clearly. Lastly she had spoken of the little female child that he had snatched from her arms by the seashore and swung into the air, and how this daughter was not of her body only but of his body, so that they were, in her and in the mystery, one body. It was at this that he had suddenly jumped up and away from her and had thrown back his head, like a man demented or like an animal baying at the moon. While she still stared at him, "I knew it! I knew it!" he cried, and ran quickly off in the direction of the hills.

For a while Melitta sat there, gazing at the place where he had vanished. The winds blew cold among the trees; the falling petals shuddered on her skin. Then she rose and went towards her home. Her heart was cheated and her thwarted blood moved unquietly, for she had looked to another ending to her submission and her gift. But she was not angry. She walked

slowly through the deepening twilight and the smell of bean-blossoms that made men mad, her people said, and sometimes she stumbled, for she was weary, and shivered a little in the evening air. She felt not fear but bewilderment and a strange new weakness, as though what she had done had left her empty and exposed. Yet still she was not angry, so plainly now did she recognise the spirit that had compelled her to yield to Manthos and to give him up her secret. The power had not been in him, nor yet in her. Nor was it the demon that she had called love although akin to love, perhaps. It came from without, a strong ghost, not to be withstood, inevitable, truly, as the death that comes to all creatures. So Melitta, seeing that Fate had driven her, that Fate held her in its hands, walked meekly.

Yet reaching the village she was oppressed; her heart grew heavy, as with foreboding. As she passed her mother's doorway she saw one of her youngest sisters hasten in. The child was carrying a pitcher full of water; and urged by a mindless impulse, Melitta followed her, and coming into the hut discovered Sophia lying sick. And at this, for the first time, a start of fear shot through her. Sophia was on her bed; by the light of the fire and of the pinewood torches that burned beside it, Melitta could see her flushed face and brightened eyes. In her hand was a cup, containing some strong-smelling potion. She held it out. But as Melitta, wishing to serve her mother, went to take the pitcher, Sophia pushed her aside. "The child," she said, and bade the younger girl pour out the water. And again Melitta felt a stir within her, although she knew that children, both boys and girls, by reason of their youthful newness, had an especial virtue that

enhanced and multiplied the virtue of fresh water, fire and all pure matters. And she knew also that her mother was not angry. She bent over the bed, touched Sophia's belly and her forehead and her lips, to pull the feverish spirit from its place and to expel it. And Sophia did not draw away. She lay still; and after she had drunk the charm, and after the child had carried three times round the bed a burning branch, newly taken from the hearth, she closed her eyes and slept.

Soon the child slept also, with the other children, and Melitta alone crouched beside Sophia. The oppression that had descended on her when she entered the village deepened as she watched the torches smoulder and lose their flames and the fire coil itself down into the ashes. Now only a little glow remained to guard her against all the perils of the night. And once more Melitta shivered. It was her mother's sickness, she thought, that weighed upon her. It had come to greet her, had led her into the hut. For her spirit and Sophia's were closely knit together, and often what happened to the one was known to the other, even at a great distance. Such a link was not strange, it was a common circumstance among the people. But between Melitta and her mother it was stronger than most, and many times when Melitta was a child and had lost or hurt herself, Sophia had been aware of it and had sought her out wherever she might be; and many times Melitta had run home from the farthest woods or meadows, hearing her mother's call where no sound was. So she had known, she thought, upon the summer night when she had come into her mother's hut, of the evil barrenness that afflicted Sophia, and so, to-night, she had been

warned of Sophia's sickness, although obscurely. For the messages were never plain; they came in a way that had no thought in it, needing true interpretation. Where this was wanting the mind mistook them or lost them altogether.

But to Melitta they were strong and sure, and staring into the fire, she suddenly grew cold, wondering was it what had passed between herself and Manthos, the insult she had offered to the chasm, that had sped swiftly to her mother and caused her sickness? For Sophia was the ruler of the chasm and its ghostly cave, and of the caves where the dead lay and of every cleft and hole that opened in the earth. Leader of the women, priestess of the fruits and seeds and priestess of the dead, she was the earth, she was the awful mountain from which all good and evil came. Her spirit being part of theirs, she would be the first to suffer from the earth-ghosts' damage. And at this thought it was as though a breath blew upon Melitta, an increasing wind that drove towards her, as a breeze drives leaves, gently, strongly, furiously, images and sounds of fear. Once again she saw the furies of the chasm. They swam about her head, twittering like bats; they croaked upon her shoulders, like the ravens that ate carcasses, death's birds; they hissed like snakes in the shadows of the hut. And all these creatures were Sophia. Now Sophia herself stood before her daughter, and she was not the kindly mother, protector of children, giver of food, with milk and honey at her breasts and the corn-loving doves, sweet lords of the fields, upon her shoulders. She was entwined with serpents, evil-eyed, horrible. And Melitta cowered, utterly abased. Yet her fear, although it was greater than before, was different from her first fear.

She did not struggle; she sought no remedy, hoped for no escape. For if Sophia and the earth-ghosts were death and vengeance, their power was of an inevitable Fate.

And so, presently, Melitta slept. The night passed. Still half-drowsing, she heard the children stir and the birds sing outside the hut and the hum of bees. And then, as she moved, turning towards her mother, she heard Sophia speak in a loud voice. "I am," she said, and again more quietly (though Melitta was not sure of this), "I am." But when Melitta questioned her: "I said nothing," Sophia answered. She was standing by her bed. She yawned and scratched herself. "The evil has gone," she said.

CHAPTER VI

When Manthos first ran from Melitta his mind held no thought but one. He went fast, going where his legs had chosen, and as he sped along the river bank he cried within him, "I knew it!" And again as he reached the hills and started to climb, his feet and blood jumped only to that song. He lied. The knowledge that Melitta had revealed to him was altogether new; if she had shown him a tree, roots uppermost, with fruit and branches mingling in the earth, the sight would not have been more strange. Yet he did not lie. The thought that shouted in him was more real than the stones he touched or the night that darkened round him. He sprang up the rocks, exulting in their hardness and in the swift river that flowed beneath and in the shining of the moon and stars and in the earth-scented night. So exactly had his sense leaped to the new wisdom, so close had been their immediate embrace, that it was recognition that he felt and not astonishment, not discovery.

He reached a high place beside a cave, and here his legs said, "we have run enough," and he stopped. But his heart rejoiced more blithely than before. His pride was such that it seemed he had but to put up a hand to pluck the yellow moon out of the sky, but to lift and kick his foot to send the hill and all the rocks and shrubs on it bowling. He was a male, he thought, and pulling off the cloth that bound his loins, he sprang again and again into the air, naked, crying,

"Manthos! Manthos!" Yet greater even than the exultation that his body gave him was the pride of mind that followed it. He ceased to jump. He crouched upon the ground, hugging his knees, staring at the blackness and the shining of the sky, and the new thoughts that the words "I am a male," had wakened, leaped for him. They moved everywhere in his understanding, like quick flames, brightening now this obscurity and now that. He saw the holiness that was in man and that could make men, spread over half the world. It danced in the fields to which young men gave life with their lives, it crept in the graves where serpents, that were ghosts of men, ruled the black earth and its dead. The earth was female and the sea towards which his bowels yearned, sweetest and wildest, fairer than any maiden, and the moon also, ruler of plants and of women. But the pine-trees were male and the fish that possessed the waters. And male was the rain that fell upon the earth, and male the sky, and male the sun, and male the wild fig-tree that caused the tame trees to multiply and sweeten.

He gazed upon this strange world until he could gaze no longer. Its vastness bewildered him, the endless count of male and female, and his mind turned of itself, while he rested more soberly, to narrower, less varied things. But his excitement quickened these also, so that new thoughts and fancies continued to spring up, filling him, each time, with a sudden joy. Often in the past he had pondered the ways and nature of the spirits, asking was the truth concerning them the same the people said, or somewhat otherwise. And now, lifting again the light of his new wisdom, the prodigious virtue that was in man, it seemed that

he discovered wonders here also. In his mind's eye he watched the processions that went each year to the holy cave, to the pine-trees, the fig-trees, the food-bearing fields, giving life, with blood, which was its essence, and with the hidden power, the people said, that was drawn forth from rocks and trees and streams. Always, from the earliest times, a woman had led these dances, performed these rites—Sophia, Sophia's mother—and because her figure was so clear to him, her uncommon potency so sharply present to his imagination, he began to picture female spirits, creatures who, in some way hitherto undreamed of by the people, were the holy women and yet were not, who moved in their bodies and their souls and yet were greater and more permanent than they. Now he saw them plainly, the mighty mothers of the fields and of the fruit, and those that nourished the young beasts in the forests and the fishes in the sea, and those that dwelt in the mountains and the chasms, adorable and hideous ones that gave life and death, reared children and devoured them. And beside the mothers he saw one daughter, Melitta, the maidens of the sowing rites and of the chasm, priestesses and victims. In truth, he thought, these beings were above all others. Yet, seeing manhood so exalted, he could but ask were the youths that died among the pine-trees and the corn not potent likewise; and the leaders of the young men, himself or Hyacinthos, were they not full of life and nourishment, the very spring-time of the world, great spirits, young, vigorous and altogether male?

This thought excited him so much that he sprang to his feet and began to pace to and fro before the cave. All his mind was lit up. Pictures filled his eyes,

a hundred stories shaped themselves in his hot fancy, telling how the male spirits moved among the female spirits and among mankind, how they were born and how they coupled and died, and in their living and their death helped men to live. Such tales had not been dreamed before by any man. But Manthos knew them. At every step a fresh one burst upon his mind. He saw the beginnings of the world, the mother mountain, no longer a woman as the people said, but man and woman mingled, virgin and husband, mother and son. Wedding with herself she had begotten the earth, the sky, the sea, and every living thing that dwelt therein. Such double creatures were common upon the island; many behaved as if they did not know if they were man or woman; no doubt that with some strong ghost for husband, Manthos thought, a man could bear a child.

But more keenly than this distant vision of the world, formed by desire and by generation, pair after pair, birth after birth, from the one soil, he saw the male spirits that stirred about him. Man and beast they were, for beasts blessed men in many ways, while some were very strong and very cunning, hence great in spells, so that their ghosts had ever been set side by side with man's, his brothers or his mortal enemies. Yet, even above animals, second only to women, he saw the fine young leaders, like himself, like Hyacinthos, keen of wisdom, well-muscled, amorous, who came dancing down each year to help the people gather wealth and pleasure. Each year they mated. The maidens chose them; they fought and raced and loved beneath the trees. Each year a child was born. Each year they died. For though the world was made by desire and by generation, it was made also by death,

since through the heart's blood, eaten or spilt, life burst forth again. But that, he thought, was another mystery.

These were true dreams, he felt sure, true memories of the past, true visions of the present; his joy, which was like drunkenness, told him that a mighty ghost, some dead ancestor perhaps, who knew all that was and had been, at that moment possessed him. They explained each secret matter, interpreted the law, gave the inner, hitherto hidden meaning of the ceremonies that the people made, their holy births and loves and killings. For what the spirits who were like men, who were men, had done and did, so man must do. But the people could not know this; they performed the ceremonies blindly. And now another thought occurred to him, a thought so strange to him that his heart seemed to stop at the shock of it; his legs trembled and, of themselves, stood still. What if the essence of the people's faith were wrong? They said that power was spread about the world, that the virtue of the holy rites was to awaken it, to compel it to flow forth. But if all things—as he had indeed first conceived—were male and female, was it not the power in man that was supreme and were not all the fiery rocks, the thundering, raining sky, the trees that lived for ever and the rich streams and seas, potent only because a man-like potency was in them?

At this, something spoke in Manthos and he ceased to dream and ponder. "I must tell them," he said aloud. He thought the words came from the spirit that inspired him, the ghostly ancestor; and hearing them so clearly, he turned about and looked into the cave, which was an ancient dwelling-place and had been used for burials. But there was no sign, and he

stood and stared again at the night and at the valley. The moon was high; it covered the earth with a pale bloom of light. And his rapture rose once more. "I will tell them," he cried, resolved to reveal to the people his dreams and visions and the strange, true tales that had been given to him. And then his delight dropped altogether and he felt weary. On the morrow he would make his revelation, he would dance out before the people the birth of men and spirits and the world, show how generation was as strong for making food and life as the life's blood that they poured out in death, and how mankind was lord of all the universe. Later he would tell his first stories of the gods. Meanwhile he was tired. He went into the cave and slept.

He dreamed of a huge man, tall as a tree, who came out of the darkness at the back of the cave and spoke with him. And although he did not understand what passed, his resolution was strengthened. After they had been together for a while the vision spread great wings and flew away, and Manthos, watching him, knew that the huge man was himself.

When he awoke it was noon. Sunshine filled the valley; the sea was of white fire that hurt the eyes. But Manthos did not leave the cave. His time was not yet, he thought; the people would not gather by the river till evening. A stream ran out beside the cave and slipped down, silently, among the rocks. He rose and drank and washed himself, then stretched his body out again in the warmth and quiet and shadows of the cave. He did not wish to eat, for emptiness, he had discovered, was good for dreams and for the spirit, which rose in ecstasy while the belly starved. So he lay, more happily than he had ever

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thought a man could lie, more happily, he believed, than if he had died and wakened, and wakening, found that death and the ghosts' world was not a black place where men grovelled like new-born mice stuck fast in mire, but—as the sailors of his people said—a sunset island, golden with fruit and corn and every pleasantness.

His excitement was past. He was free, serene. When at last evening drew near and he started to go down the hill he leaped, but without wildness, he sang aloud, but there was no fever in his cry. He went as a man goes whom truth encompasses, filling his lungs, supporting his feet, bathing his eyes. His head was held high; he carried a green bough, the sign of the holy tree and of every holiness. And at first when the people saw him dancing towards them along the river bank, they also fancied that some fine thing had happened to him. They pushed each other and whispered. "Surely," they said, "a powerful ghost is in Manthos that he moves and sings and looks so." Sophia was there and Melitta and many of the other wise women; and Hyacinthos, as it chanced, sat on a stone beside the water, apart from the youths and girls and apart from the elders who gossiped, breathing the evening air beneath the trees. All stared at Manthos. Those who rested rose to their feet, and those who were nearest to the river fell back a little, and many that were scattered here and there ran quickly together, so that, as he reached the open place where in summer the merchandise was spread and at other times the young men and women played, and as he gave the signal that told them that a great matter, a new dance, was forthcoming, the people were assembled and ready, eager to see and hear him. "He is the loveliest of all

our sons," the old women said. " His spells are good," said the old men.

So they watched him and he danced. For a long while they were quiet; curiosity kept their lips dumb and their bodies still; only their eyes blinked in surprise as Manthos, preparing the way for his strange truths, his revelation of the secrets of the world, moved through the dances that they knew but that he had changed a little. He danced, first, the rites of spring and summer, the spells that were familiar alike to men and women, each with its own sorrow and its triumph, its fighting and its death and, at the last, the rebirth of the holy pine-grove or the holy fields in a new tree, a new green stalk. And although they blinked and gaped from time to time, the sight of him pleased them; it stirred their pride as well as their astonishment. The life that quickened Manthos woke in their bodies; in them also was the new vigour that ran in his arms as he waved the holy bough, or moved it to and fro in place of sacred knives and axes, the strength that curved in his back as he bent down to gather power from the earth and toss it up again to heaven, that jumped in his legs with the high-growing corn, moved in his loins as he re-lived the nights after the feasting, shone in his eyes as he held up the bough, proclaiming life's uprising and man's share in it.

His beauty and his strength were theirs, even as the spells were theirs that he, for the first time, assembled and strung together in this odd way. And still their pride, their pleasure lingered while he fought the reaping-fights and mimicked the gathering of the first-fruits and the feasting and the loves of the year's victim, the wedding of the youth whose death set the world free. It was not until the character of his dance

changed, until he, who had lain down a man, rose up, it seemed, a woman, that a murmur ran through the people, a noise that was like the first purr and hiss of waves swelling on the seashore.

He danced on; he was become Melitta, Sophia, the women of the sowing mysteries. And again the low murmuring noise whispered about him. It came from where Sophia stood among her sisters. "Ah..." said the wise women. Some glanced furtively at one another; and Melitta, who was near her mother, shrank back, hid herself quickly in the crowd. But none spoke. "Ah!" said Sophia, and once more the voices of the wise women echoed the sound, this time a little louder, like waves that rise with a rising wind. But still Manthos danced. He moved more wildly now; his eyes shone with an increasing light, for this was the beginning of his revelation; each movement took him nearer to its core, which was, although he did not know it, Sophia's sacred dance, the acting of the birth, after the generation. Because he had witnessed such things only among animals he did not move as women move; to the men especially his dance was awkward, ugly.

Yet the spell was plain. He crouched upon the ground; he was naked. And the people began to shuffle with their feet, to shift their bodies from side to side, to mutter, not every now and then, but in an ever-rising moan, like anxious beasts, looking at each other with shamed, uneasy faces. Manthos moved; and somewhere in the crowd a woman whispered, "Blasphemy," and "Blasphemy!" said another from beside Sophia, and then, in a crash, the cry swept all the people and "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" they howled, the women with rage and indignation, the men with horror. All were jigging with their arms and

feet and all were shrieking. An elder ran to Sophia. "Is it the spell?" he shouted, and "No, no! He lies!" she answered furiously, whereat the howling of the people rose yet louder. Shrillest of all were the companions of Manthos, the fishermen who had seen him touch the half-drowned man and Melitta's holy daughter, the kinsmen who had feared his unusual boldness. Each one of them who had said, "no good will come to him," screamed out that he was mocking them, that his dance was an obscenity, an abomination. They moved more vigorously than the others; as they jumped, their heads nodded high above their neighbours. "Out with him! Out with him!" they cried.

In their midst was Manthos. At the first noise he had not ceased to dance. Despite the whispers and the mutterings he had yet tried to display to the people the truth that he had plucked for them, the secret that contained, hid in it, bright seeds within a shabby husk, the heart of wisdom and of power. After the birth he would have told them yet stranger matters. He would have shown how, although the holy babe appeared to die, it lived and grew, became a lovely youth, and so brought to them, year after year, spring and new life and wealth and happiness. But the people's noise increased, and Manthos paused. He hesitated. Once, he lifted up the bough and leaped and shouted, striving to recapture their notice and their love. But Sophia had cried, "No, no. He lies," and Manthos weakened. He struggled on, moving feebly, a bird whose wings are limed, a swimmer drowning. A strained look was in his eyes; the life ebbed from his body; his arms sank down; he fell upon his knees in the middle of the market-place and bowed his head.

CHAPTER VII

THE people did not harm Manthos. They drove him from the market-place, but with weapons no harsher than cries and abuse. He was become unholy, and like the evil spirits that they expelled in spring-time, they spat him out. "Accursed," they called him, "polluted," "foul," so that he went from them, his head bent, dragging his feet, shorn of every dignity and every greatness, a castaway. They drew aside as he approached; his touch was vile, giving instant ill-luck, death perhaps. By the river, which was the path he took, Hyacinthos stood upon his stone. He had not shouted at his brother. While the rabble stormed he had remained quiet, although erect and watching. As he passed by Manthos lifted his eyes and looked at him, and Hyacinthos fell back a step and made the sign, quickly with his fingers, that was the common way of warding off evil from the soul. And Manthos clenched his fists, thumbs uppermost.

But his hands dropped; and still with lowered head and very wearily, he went along the river bank and presently climbed the hill to Sophia and Melitta's village, to Melitta's hut. He went in; which also was an unholy act, forbidden, dangerous, that no man had ever dared before. Melitta sat beside her fire. When the great cry of "blasphemy," had sounded, she had run from the people. Half-blinded, it seemed, and stumbling, she had come to her home, and now, her body shaken as though with fever, she crouched over the flames. Her eyes were dull; she drooped like a

plant torn from the ground and already dry and withering. Although she saw Manthos enter, she made no movement. And Manthos did not speak to her or touch her. It did not come into his mind to tell her of his revelation, to share with her his vision of the mighty spirit who had bidden him to do as he had done. He bent over the harvest-fan in which his daughter lay and picked the child up, looked at it, felt its limbs; then set it down and went away.

Melitta sat on. Throughout the night she remained staring before her. She did not sleep. Once her daughter cried; she paid no heed. At dawn she got slowly up and went and gathered leaves, foliage from the trees and ferns and plants from her garden, some with their flowers and some with little more than roots, snatched up haphazard. With these she wrapped the child, taking care not to touch it save through the green swaddlings, and so made a bundle and carried it towards Sophia's hut. And as she walked it was as though, within her heart, a creature swelled and swelled and quivered, like a fish flung on to the ground to die, and gave a leap and lay still and quivered and swelled again.

About Sophia's hut there was a considerable agitation. A group of women stood before the door, looking in, and at every moment others appeared, hurrying from the neighbouring villages and from the valley. They clung together, murmuring like angry bees. Those that were nearest to the door made the least noise, held fast by curiosity, but those that were farther away moaned very grievously. "The rain-maker is dead," they wailed. "Now we shall all die;" while from the door came the cry of mourning, "Ai! Ai!"

long-drawn and desolate. Within the hut the mother of Manthos and of Hyacinthos knelt with her sisters and Sophia. They held each other and swayed their bodies to and fro. "He is dead," they wept. "Aï! Aï! A brother has killed a brother!" Sophia was the loudest. Both her arms were about the stricken mother; her head was thrown back. It seemed she did not see Melitta enter and set the child down in a corner and turn, trembling, away.

Melitta went from the hut and from the crowd of mourners as though she were alone in an empty world. She heard no cries, saw no wild gestures, was heedless, even, of the threatening faces certain of the women raised to hers, aghast that Sophia's daughter should hasten, at such an hour, from her holy duties. But it was not the knowledge that Manthos had killed Hyacinthos that had thus made her fear increase until there was no room in her for any other sense. It was the sight of Sophia. As she looked at her mother she had felt the creature that was in her heart, she thought, rise up and swell for the last time. A blackness was before her eyes; her legs were grown so weak that they could scarcely carry her whither, nevertheless, she must go. And as she staggered on, her spirit, utterly possessed, was numb, made as though dead. She climbed, but did not know it; her feet that had walked on grass and flowers, stumbled against stones, yet she was unaware of harshness. So she came to the women's meeting-place. She fell upon her hands and knees and crept slowly forward. At this season the holy place was less arid than in autumn. The sunshine lay lightly on the rocks; the shadows of the hills were cool and sweet. Despite the hidden cave, the air was fresh, and tiny herbs spread green among the stones,

flourishing in the warmth that soon would kill them. But to Melitta every breath she drew was heavy as earth; the ground on which she crawled was damp and heated. She went towards the precipice, past the rocks on which sacrifice was made, past the hollow where water, that she dared not drink, trickled and whispered. Now she lay by the chasm's edge, though only for a moment, for already her limbs were almost without strength and darkness was closing round her. She lay and stretched her body. She reached out her arm, her hand, as though to catch at something, like a beast that reaches out its paw in laziness or play or to touch its young. Then, with a last effort, she rolled over.

All that day and all that night the elders and the wise women conferred together upon the death of Hyacinthos. They assembled, with as many of the lesser people as could find room, beside Sophia's hut. The mother of the dead man and of the murderer still wept, piercing the sunlight and the soft air with her shrill grief, tearing the night's darkness until it seemed to fall in arrows of sharp terror upon those that heard her. At every shriek, a reminder of their common loss, their common anxiety, they started and gripped their hands and moaned in echo. They were perplexed, for within the memory of man there had been no killing of this kind. And they were very much afraid. The earth, which had received a son's blood, was dirtied, angry. Her vengeance, they thought, would surely come upon them swiftly, whether in storm or flood or ruined crops and famine or fire or plague. However it might be, all would suffer. Yet for that time they did nothing. Manthos, indeed, had fled into the

mountains; their spies, sent out to watch him, said that he was in a cave, alone. But had he been by them, had his polluted body been within the easiest spear's throw, they would not have touched him. To kill again was but to add blood to blood, sacrilege to sacrilege, danger to danger. The earth would be yet more fouled and her appalling wrath the greater.

So they sat and debated, after their fashion, what the next day would bring to Manthos and themselves, in what manner the vengeance of the earth and of the ancestral spirits—who also must set brother-killing above every abomination save one—would be made manifest. They spoke little. Every now and then one lifted his voice and in hurried, excited tones, told of the wrong that had been done them, the insult to the ghosts, the danger. Then he fell silent while his companions nodded and murmured their approval; until another took up the theme, reciting, now, the need that they were in of instant purification, how they must be rid of the evil and make the world clean and holy again. And then, once more, speech ceased, while the mothers wept in the hut and the people echoed their wailing and waited for another speaker. At the first light of morning Sophia came out of the hut and looked about her, scanning the women's faces. A second time she appeared and a third, but on this last occasion her eyes no longer betrayed astonishment or anxiety. A woman moved sideways towards her, hitched at her with her shoulder. "She is not here," she said, and peered into Sophia's face. And Sophia drew herself up. "The earth has taken her," she said. "I and the spirits willed it so." For she knew now that Melitta was dead; only death could keep a priestess from her place at such a moment. And she

knew also, because Melitta had run from the river's side the day before and because she had died, that it was she who had betrayed the women's secret. When, very soon after, the news was spread that Melitta's body was in the chasm : " I willed it," Sophia said, so that there was surprise and no mourning. The women muttered secretly among themselves. " The ghosts have killed her," they whispered. " It is good. She broke the law." To the men they said that the girl's death was an especial sacrifice.

The sun was not yet high as Sophia, with those of the people whose presence was necessary or fitting, left her hut to go and bury Hyacinthos. Concerning Manthos nothing had been decided; although looked for eagerly, there had been no omen, no sign of the spirits' will in this matter. But " Let the ancients speak," said Sophia. They were going to the holy burial places; by the new grave she would, she promised them, consult the ancestral dead and obtain from them a clear judgment. And at this some one sneezed, showing that a ghost was among them and approved the notion. And the crowd departed satisfied. The mass of them returned home, there to remain again all day and all night, awake, with veils over their faces and leaves and twigs in their hands, saving themselves from death's miasma. Yet the procession that followed Sophia to the dead man's house was larger than was usual; Sophia had bidden more wise women go with her, and more elders, and more of the strong young men and girls who were required to carry the corpse and make the grave and dance and play upon the funeral instruments. By the door of the house a branch from a holy cypress grove had been set up, to warn the common people, evidence and

guardian of the death within. Inside, Hyacinthos lay where he had fallen, watched by his weeping sisters and surrounded by amulets and pans of burning charcoal and strong-scented herbs, that the evil spirits who seek to attack dead men, both visibly and invisibly, should not approach him.

And from the first the women who waited by the door knew that Sophia was giving Hyacinthos a finer funeral than had ever been performed for any man. Such prolonged washings, such chants, so great a wealth of torches and of perfumes and of holy wreaths and branches would not have displeased the ghost of a wise woman, they said, even that of a great mother, a holy ancestress. But Hyacinthos had been a mighty rain-maker and their first priest; moreover his soul, enraged by murder, needed particular care lest it should add its anger to the earth's and do the world further mischief. So they were well content. With good will and good hope they held their holy boughs and moaned while Sophia and her daughters, clad in the special garments that were kept for such times, went about their business in the hut; reverently they walked behind the corpse as it was carried on its litter of leaves to the burial-place, joining their voices to the furious cries of the mother and the sisters, while Sophia walked ahead, holding the largest branch, and the torch-bearers and fire-bearers lifted their flames in the bright sunshine, and the flutes and drums made dreadful music, and the young girls and youths danced. They came to the cave where the clan of Manthos and Hyacinthos laid their dead; they went into its heavy air and gloomy shadows; and here also, by the light of the torches and of the fire-vessels that the priestesses put down, they watched Sophia meekly. They were

not astonished that she should give Hyacinthos a place of his own, somewhat apart from his kinsmen, with fine flat stones to enclose him and a great heap of earth beside, wherewith presently to make a mound, scored with signs, to show that it was the same as the mother mountain, bosom of the earth herself, to which he was returning, soul to soul and body to body. They were glad to see the profusion of victims that Sophia slew, and the quantities of food and wine that she provided for the ghost's refreshment, and the especial honours that she paid to the charms and to the instruments and weapons that were also disposed about the body, the axe with which Hyacinthos had cut the holy trees, his knives and arrows, the thunder-roarer that he had made to summon the storm, the box that had rattled down the rain.

At last Hyacinthos was laid in the ground. All had been done that could be done with pure water and pure fire and amulets and holy plants to make him safe from other spirits and to make the people safe from him. Sophia knelt and opened his eyes, and for the last time his mother flung herself upon him, kissed his mouth, and his sisters and all the women for the last time raised the keen, bidding him farewell and a sweet rest and a quick passage from amongst them. Then the young men shovelled in the earth and shaped the mound, and Sophia, rising to her feet, made ready to perform her second sacrifice, her second awful ceremony, which was to call up a spirit from the graves, as she had promised. For this much blood was needed, and once again the young girls brought her victims, which she slew, while the young men dug a hole, a deep trench, near to the place, not of Hyacinthos, but of his kinsmen. Into the hole Sophia

poured the blood, muttering as she did so; and other fires and other torches were lit and other strong-smelling herbs were burnt in them. And as Sophia moved in the shadows and the half-light, making her spell, the people, little by little, became agitated. She stood upright and waved her arms, and the sweat ran from her big breasts and shoulders; she crouched over the hole, over the braziers; her voice was shrill. And about the mourners the air, that smelt of living bodies and of dead, was very hot, and the smoke of the pine-torches and the burning plants was thick and pungent. It seemed to them that they saw figures stirring at the back of the cave, that the lights had left their places and were floating here and there. These were spirits, they thought, ghosts that were evil, or maybe good, it made no matter. And presently, as Sophia paused, a seeress gave a cry and dropped upon the ground and writhed and mouthed and shrieked out, in a hoarse, unfamiliar voice, that she saw the mother spirit of the dead man's clan, there behind Sophia. The ghost had come at their bidding, her strange voice said, to tell them what to do with Manthos. And the mourners fell upon their faces; all save Sophia, who held the woman up and received the message, which was that Manthos must not be killed lest his foulness should indeed pollute them further, but must be cast out, even as all abominations were cast out in spring and summer and before every festival. "Out with him!" the seeress cried, and again, as Sophia lifted her up and turned her face towards the people: "Into the sea! Into the sea!"

After that the people left the cave. Close beside it a feast was laid out. The fires were alight, cooking the meat and fish and cakes; great jars of honey and

barley wine stood ready. But no man could eat until the land was purified; so, for that time, the mourners waited, and Sophia cleansed them of the funeral stain with ashes from the holy fires, which she poured on to their heads, and water from a holy stream, which she splashed over their bodies with her bough. When the washing was concluded she went inside and removed her robe and put it in a chest, hidden and safe, for in its holiness there was danger from the death that it had witnessed; and then, all things being in order, she called her boy sons and bade them go quickly to the young men of the tribes and deliver the ghostly mother's message. The young men, she said, when they had done what they must do, were to join the elders and the wise women at the feast. That would be their particular honour, their excellent privilege. And she further bade the boys tell them to make haste, for the sun would soon be setting.

The young men knew where Manthos hid. He had done his killing without stealth. A score of neighbours had seen him lift his axe in the doorway of his brother's hut, and twice as many had followed him—though secretly, for they were in great terror—as he ran swiftly to the hills. Since then boys, concealed in the undergrowth, behind rocks, in trees, had watched him. Every hour one of them, instantly replaced by a fellow, had crept back to the villages to tell the elders of the murderer's movements; how, on the first day, he had bathed himself and killed a wild goat and eaten and slept, and how, in the night, he had left his refuge and gone to another, near the river mouth and the place where the boats were kept. And it was here, in a shelter where men had lived in times past, that the young men found him. The shelter was upon a cliff.

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Rocks, which had once formed a rude stairway, led to it, and above it other rocks thrust out, tangled with creepers and roots of trees and bushes whose leaves drooped in a green curtain over the face of the cliff. It looked out at the sea, at a little unpeopled island that was, perhaps, a day's sail away.

The young men stood in a half-circle below the shelter. The sea lay behind them; their spears were in their hands and pointing inward. "Come out, Manthos!" they cried. "Come out or we will kill you!" for they were hunters, accustomed to death, and moreover a heat was on them that they had never known before. And Manthos came from behind the screen of leaves. He did not seem alarmed or weakened. He carried his axe, but when he saw the number of his enemies he stuck it in his belt and slowly, looking at them, strapped the belt tighter. "Come out! Come down!" they cried and hopped on their feet, angrily. And he obeyed them, although still slowly, treading deliberately from rock to rock. The cliff rose above him, matted and overhanging. There was but one way to go. As he advanced the young men stepped back. Then, after he had reached the shore, they swung about and moved sideways across the cliff's face until they stood again in a half-circle, and Manthos was between them and the sea. For a moment their strange heat flushed hotter. "Hoo!" they cried, and danced and jerked their spears. "Hoo! the brother-killer! Into the sea! Into the sea!" But they did not hurt him. Dancing they went forward while he went back, his face set towards them. Only once, as he reached the water and turned to walk into it, a spear flew. It grazed his shoulder, and at the sight of blood they all howled together. But the ghostly mother had said

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that his death must not be on their hands; no second spear was thrown. Deeper and deeper Manthos went. Suddenly he dived and vanished. A long while after, as it seemed, they saw him swimming towards the little island. The sun was setting. "He cannot do it," one of his kinsmen said. "It is too far. The sea that he insulted will devour him."

BOOK II

The years passed. Little by little, for such things do not happen quickly, the knowledge that Manthos had sought to give his people was spread among men. Now, throughout that world, in the countries that encircled the Mediterranean Sea, and in those that lay between it and the southern ocean, and on the islands, it was believed that while a rock, a stream, a tree could father children, men and the ghosts of men were the commoner begetters. And many things were changed, though not only through this; other discoveries in thought and circumstances were made then, bred of need and curiosity and fear, and served to lift man up and to confuse him.

But for a long while, among the spells, the getting of children and of food remained chief. And here the holiness of man was much exalted. Men had dreamed as Manthos had dreamed; the fancies that had come to him had visited their minds also. So the people agreed that in the mysteries of generation man was, indeed, second only to woman. Together, by their sacred intercourse, they gave life to men and beasts and fruits; and as more years passed such matings became rites of extreme potency, the first and most needful of the ceremonies. Where the ancient mystic generation was still seen the manner of it appeared changed, and it was said that if a rock or stream could give health and plenty, if a tree could wed a woman, the reason was that a male spirit possessed it, dwelt in it, made it, at the least, its temporary habitation. New spells were devised, adaptations of the old, to make sure that the holy spirit, heir to the tree's holiness, was in its home, or, if it were abroad,

to induce it to return and so shed its blessings on the people. But although in these magical ways men grew proud, as human parents they long remained humble. In many countries, when the hour came wherein children became known no longer by their mothers' names but by their fathers', they invented special rites to mark that their sons were in truth their own, flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone. Even as certain male birds sit also on the eggs, men hatched out—as the saying is—their children, pretending, after the babes were born, that they, the fathers, were mothers and must lie in bed groaning and writhing and must abstain from certain foods and suffer and sometimes die in childbirth.

With time, too, kings arose, leaders such as Manthos and Hyacinthos had hoped to be. They were the holiest of men. Even as the fruitfulness of all the women of her land had been summed up in Sophia, even as she had been chief in having and in giving luck, so the kings were said to contain within themselves all their nations' fortunes. They were the great rain-makers, the great magicians, divinity was in them. And presently, because of this, it was held sufficient for the people's good if the king alone, with the wisest woman, fulfilled each year the holy act of marriage. Lesser men might do the same. Indeed they did so, in spring and summer and at other seasons, feasting and revelling in the ancient manner. But the king's power with the power of the priestess was enough. Other men had power, other men had virtue; he was most powerful, most virtuous.

It seems that there was a moment when the people, after the king had reigned a while, killed him. He

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was beloved, he was precious, their life dwelt in his. But even as the tree was burnt each year and a new tree was set up, so the king was slaughtered at certain intervals of time and instantly replaced by another. It is said that this was done in order to preserve the people's holiness, their safety, their luck, which was a corporate thing yet vested in the king, and that it was needful for such holiness to die while still young and fresh so that it might be handed on to its successor in the full bloom of vigour. Many rites were performed, it is also said, to convey the dying king's life and power securely to the new king and to keep the new king strong throughout his reign and triumphant over every enemy.

Such no doubt were the ancient practices. But besides these kings that died there were ever the scapegoats, the youths to whom the people gave (as I believe) the sacred first-fruits and the new girls, so that he, having absorbed their evil and their good, might carry the one away in death and confer the other in blessings on the world. And it seems that at some time the king himself was this scapegoat. Whether he was so from the beginning or whether he became so presently, his necessary death being made, for economy's sake, to serve two purposes, is not certain. However this may be, the king was, in life, the high priest and the war-leader, being the subtlest magician, the cleverest rain-maker, the strongest and craftiest warrior, the man, in fact, who had the largest share of holiness; and in his death he was the holy victim. So his dying combined all comforts, the riddance of evil with the greatest sum of power for his heir. And so the end of the plan may be seen, perhaps, evolving directly out of its

beginning. For these wisest, strongest men would clearly, in a quick-witted people, be those who would presently rebel against their doom, saying, "We are too useful to the world, too strong in war, too cunning in peace, too full of luck and virtue to die. Take you our sons or take another priest or take yonder madman (a strange divinity is plainly in him) and kill him in our place." For so it happened. With the passing of time it became inexpedient to kill kings, and lesser men, their sons, or youths dressed to appear royal, were slain in their stead.

But to turn again to earlier days—before one king was consecrated there had been many. At first all men had holiness; then this one or that was lifted up, by circumstances or by some quality in himself, his strangeness or his superiority in wit or strength or by a mingling of event and virtue. And with the magnifying of the leaders, the spirits, in their turn, were magnified, for Heaven is ever a mirror of the earth. Like Manthos, men had watched the processions that went dancing to the happy places that gave life and to the graves that took it back again, and seeing one figure set above the others, they, too, had formed a picture of yet more powerful, more holy dancers, spirits who were like, who were akin to the visible dancers or were incarnate in them, but who lived on while these died. Ghosts also, visions seen in dreams or thought, had served to persuade men that spirits like themselves, like their fearful and respected dead, lived among them. The actual had shaped the ideal in their minds; they knew no difference between fact and fancy, truth and mental image. Thus their pictures were as real to them as the trees, the corn, that they continued, despite their newer beliefs, to sacrifice each

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year. On earth one living mother danced before her daughters; on earth one chieftain led the young men, one chieftain died. Therefore they conceived of spirit mothers who, with their nymphs, ruled the green gardens and the fields, the streams and seas and forests and all young creatures; and beside each mother they saw one young god, her son or husband, who was master of the world as she was mistress.

So now in heaven a woman sat. She was the earth, she was the mountain, she was Pandora, giver of all gifts. On Mount Ida she was Cybele and she was Agdestis, a monster, half-man, half-woman, who in her female shape had loved her son and caused his death, and in her male shape had fed the earth with her own seed and blood. In Egypt she was Isis and in Babylon Ishtar, and when she was the Cretan corn men called her Deo and when she was black death her name was Proserpine or Hecate. And she had many other names and men praised her in many other guises, as Apuleius says. Always a young male god stood beside her, raising his head among the young men. And sometimes there was a child, whether a sun or fire-child, born of the high places, or a corn-child growing in the fields, or a son of the mighty rivers, born among reeds by the water-side. But indeed, although men did not know it in those days, a child was ever there, for the number of creation is three. Love, which is one, must become two and active and so three in the object loved, else it turns upon itself and becomes death, and the serpent devours its own body.

Yet still on earth gods were born. Each tribe, each city might have a Mother and a Son, but it had also

lesser spirits, the powers that dwelt in every visible and invisible thing. And often these were singled out, and with the passing of years, mounted to heaven. Thus it was the custom in certain lands, when a man saw a grave, for him to throw a stone at it, to save himself from the ghost beneath. So heaps of stones rose here and there about the land, each hiding its own spirit. And presently it came into the people's minds, from seeing so many heaps and every one the same, that one spirit lived in all of them. And because the heaps had become landmarks, guiding travellers where roads were not, the spirit was called the Guide; and because the heaps had first marked graves, doors of the underworld, the spirit was said to be he who led the ghosts through that dark country, Hermes, Guide of Souls. Other gods, some say, sprang more directly from the tombs of men, dead kings, dead heroes, mighty ghosts who in their lives had fought victorious battles or had devised good laws, bringing order and prosperity to their peoples. And as city struggled against city and land against land, the gods that conquered, whether they were ghosts of men or spirit lords, were raised above their fellows. Again, the powers of the sky and of the elements became of the heavenly order, so that a god dwelt in the sun and in the moon and all the stars. The scapegoat also, since he became the king, became a god likewise. For, long after the kings had ceased to die each year or each eight years or in any circumstances save by the hand of Fate or their enemies, the scapegoat lingered, either as substitute for the king or in some other guise. And still his death gave life, his foulness was the people's good. And as men became less confused in thought, more conscious of reality, as they sought to distinguish good from

evil, he appeared in their eyes two-fold, a victim who was their offscouring, compelled to eat the holy, dangerous first-fruits, compelled to purify the land by taking on himself its filth, and a divinity who conferred feasting and happiness and to whom the first-fruits were offered humbly, as his due.

But indeed all those who died became gods—the youths, the maidens, the infants who were killed by hanging or by burning or by other means. They died that their blood and life might be given to the world to revive it—in winter when the new day, the new sun, required nourishment, in spring when the new trees and corn must be fed, in summer and autumn when the earth herself was shorn and languid. And though at one moment the scapegoat may have seemed holiest, all were holy and in due course became divine. Yet it must not be supposed that godliness, in those days, was considered very high. Emerging from a time when every man was, in his measure, powerful and a magician, the spirits at first stood but two steps above the ordinary man, one step or half a step above the leaders.

By these and maybe by many other means were gods made. And tales such as Manthos had invented were told of all of them. In this way knowledge of their nature was stored and spread and man's conduct towards them justified. For now the ancient wisdom was passing. In the ceremonies many had forgotten why they did this or that. But the tales gave good reason, and where the king wed the queen priestess it was said that these were heavenly loves; and where the women mourned the dying of the world in autumn it was because the Mother wept for her dead son or

spouse or favourite daughter; and if a man was killed for the crop's sake and cut in fourteen pieces, the story went that such had been the agony of the life-giving one, son, brother, husband of the Mother, and just that number were the severed, scattered portions of his body. The creation of the world, the shaping of the sea and of the sky and of mankind, was another business, performed each year in the ceremonies. Tales were told of that also, and of the gods' hand in it; and further stories were related of the great beings, some wholly divine, some almost mortal, who gave instruments and inventions to mankind, helping, here, to deal a surer death, and there, to make the good life that all men coveted, better. These tales were much favoured. Men liked to hear how the holy smiths and potters used fires in their kilns and by their anvils and wrought the metal that had been found among the rocks into arms and tools, and moulded the pots, which were no longer drab but bright with colour and the forms of creatures. And many tales were told only for amusement. Ships larger than any Manthos had sailed went over the seas, and horses galloped across the land, carrying these things, with men and death and words, all over that world.

And with words went confusion. In ancient days speech had been scarce. Men acted, and their actions were understood by other men because the thought of all was one. But now speech and obscurity were together multiplied. In every land the stories of the gods differed; and even in one land, opinions concerning holy things were not the same. In some places man-spirits were supreme; in others beasts were held most sacred (perhaps because of the strength and cunning that was in them and that man absorbed by

eating, perhaps because men had chosen them as blood-brothers and spirit fathers of their clans, perhaps because they, of their own instinct, ate the first-fruits); in a third, the ancient notion remained unchanged whereby power was believed to reside in every object, thus leading men to think, still, that the whole of life was in a manner bound together. And in many places, indeed in most, all these thoughts were held concurrently. Merging the one with the other, contradicting, overlapping, they caused and increased the ever-growing dimness. For this reason—among many reasons—the ceremonies and the gods began to be confused, blended together. Where there was speech and contact between people, notions were borrowed and fitted into existing notions or added thereto. And sometimes this was done exactly and sometimes new interpretations were made or changes were slipped in. So the ideas' first meanings were altered or lost or made to serve two purposes; the gods' functions were combined, and those that had been solely of the trees, perhaps, assumed the powers of sun-gods, and those that had been of the sun became also rulers of the corn. Another reason, it is said, for the blending of gods and ceremonies was economy. With time it seemed wasteful to have many sacrifices, many killings, and so one rite, one seasonal celebration, was made to do the work of two or several. Yet the number of the gods did not decrease.

And little by little another picture of the divine nature was forming. In earliest times men had seen themselves as gods. Their priestly kings ruled over all the world; the Mother was the earth and all its women. But here and there doubts had arisen. Eyes acuter than others had seen that the most perfect spell

could go awry, that rain or sunshine were withheld despite the most compelling of enchantments. So it was whispered that maybe the highest gods were stronger than man and that they could, by their capricious wills, alter his destiny. And fear increased, and with its increasing came the wish to gratify and propitiate by means of gifts and praise and homage. Always there had been fear, whether of death or fate or of the pollutions men brought upon themselves or of the anger of the holy creatures or of an ancestor, or of the failure or one spell before another. And always gifts had been offered to the wise women and the magicians and the dead, to keep them kindly or to avert their wrath. Now gifts were made more humbly to the gods. The kings, the great spirits must be fed. Corn must be given to them and blood and gold—the divine fire that came out of the earth—where gold was, that they might have the wherewithal to feed their people. This followed the ancient custom, corn to corn, blood to blood, life to life. But now the gods were fed also in order that their favour might be gained or their anger quieted. Even as a man, being in fear of his master, would bring him of the blue glaze that the Egyptians made, to please him, so the people brought pleasant things into the groves and temples. And since, of old, blood and corn had been the fare of trees and fields and all the sacred creatures, it was especially blood and corn that they brought. So the holy killing of men and animals and the scattering of grain took on a new aspect.

Hereby also, following the increase of words and thoughts and fears, the priests and seers, children of the ancient magicians, received new honours. Colleges of wise men arose, skilled in knowledge of the god's

temper, learned in his secret ways, profound in his and every other wisdom. They knew how best to approach the god, how to appeal, how to propitiate; they read the signs, whether of the spirits' will or of fate, as transcribed in the entrails of men and animals, or in the stars, or in other quarters. They were the inheritors of the ancient lore, which they stored up and developed at their leisure. And being well aware that knowledge is power, they guarded their secrets jealously. So it happened, after a while, that there came to be two ways in holy things, the open and the hidden, the dancing and rude worship of the common people, who were too busy or too foolish to do more than take their outward share in outward ceremonies, and the rites and wisdom of the priests and kings, of the men who knew the secrets.

As I have said, this hidden wisdom soon developed, and beyond all recognition. A forest of rites grew about each rite, a world of symbols budded on each symbol. The sea-urchin's shell that Sophia had treasured and that had been called holy because of its likeness to a woman's secret parts, was said in some lands to be, not merely a sea-serpent's egg, but the very egg of life, made by the sweat and spittle of snakes dancing magically in a magic cave. An egg was very holy. The mysterious transformation whereby it presently became a bird, made it a fruitful sign of life and change and eternity. At the last, the world itself, the entire universe, was thought to come out of an egg. As for the snakes that lived under the ground, that shed their skins and so became new each year, they were death and generation and rebirth. This sort of knowledge, these priests that stored it, served greatly to increase fear among the ignorant people. For indeed

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the true wand of the magician is the fear that he instils. By playing on the terror that most men carry somewhere in their hearts, any man can raise the devil.

But great fear was not yet. At the time of which I am now speaking, men lived for the most part in friendliness with their gods, and even the dark spirits who were by essence dreadful, death, sickness, accident, could still be kept at bay by amulets and incantations. And change came so gradually that no one knew it. Like trees the ceremonies and the customs flourished. No eye had marked the growing of this twig, that flower, when behold, a branch and a new fruit were there. Yet often these changes were as great as that from night to day; things that had been safest became most full of peril. Thus it was, I think, with the ancient, sacred beans. In earliest times the people had eaten little else, but with the passing of the days they had grown to like barley better, to see it as no less holy. Yet the beans were offered always to the dead, who hated change, and for this reason, being dead men's food, they became, although still sacred, dangerous. Many revolutions were made in this way, through veneration for the past and for the dead and through fear of them. Even, as I believe, that greatest of revolutions, whereby it was unholy for a man to love all women, knowing no difference between his neighbour's and his own kin. Of old, men had lived in this manner; the gods did so still. Hence the way was respected, holy. But for the living to do what the dead did, that was unlucky; and so in most lands, it was forbidden.

Only the first surprise and innocence of the world were altogether gone. The brightness of water leaping

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from the earth, the green of a new blade of corn, were greater wonders in man's eyes when they were gods than when, calling them gifts and blessings, he raised his eyes to the high hills and said "Praise be to Deo."

CHAPTER I

About the time when the third Amenhotep reigned in Egypt, which is four hundred and fifty years, they say, after Abraham and Sarah went out of Canaan, a band of men came from the north, travelling with their wives and children and herds towards the land that is called Greece. They were the first of their tribe to seek the Mediterranean Sea, a small company, foremost of the great army that threatened. Yet they were not the first northern people to make the journey. Centuries before, others of the same tall, blue-eyed kind had ridden down to Argolis and, conquering and being conquered, had mingled with the people there—kin of the island people that had been Sophia's—and learnt their ways and settled. In those days King Minos lived in Knossos; whether he was of Sophia's blood or of the blood of the first barbarians or of the two mixed, or of yet another race that issued from the East, I am not sure. However this may be, his gods, although they had wedded with strangers from the south and from the east and maybe from the north also, were still, in the main, the ancient island spirits. And Minos was their priest and by their might a mighty king, ruling the hundred cities of Crete, and the islands and many countries on the mainland and all the seas, for he had a great fleet and the children of Sophia were skilful, crafty sailors. His palaces were finer than any in those parts, and his gold was more plentiful, and the vases and the swords and everything he used more subtly made and ornamented. The

northern men rode upon horses. Their virgins did the same and were armed like their brothers with spears and shields and knives. But the mothers and the children rode in wagons. The herds that they brought with them, the kine especially, were fatter and stronger than those they met by the way and drove before them. For many ages now, cattle had been known in that world. In certain lands they were worshipped as gods, the bulls were so grand, so fierce, the cows so fertile and kindly. But the beasts that had been fed on the luscious northern pastures were yet bigger and more god-like.

In the foremost wagon a boy sat. His age was five years and he was the last-born of his father, the chief of the men's leaders. As the wheels of the cart jerked and jolted and staggered over the hills, his yellow hair jumped on his forehead and he cried out words that he had heard the small, dark shepherds use when his father killed them and stole their corn and cattle. Sometimes, during these raids, which were not fights as yet but only matters of burning cots and farm-houses, he heard words that were like his own tongue. They were spoken by those earlier barbarians who had settled in the country many long years before. They were hunters and herdsman still, but now they tilled the ground also and swore by Deo. And the boy, riding beside his mother, aped their bastard speech and uncouth accents.

If it happened in these fights that one of his own men died, the boy's father burned the corpse, after the fashion of his race. And if the dead man was a leader he burned some of his beasts with him and sometimes his wife, that the shades of the victims might accompany their master through the flames and serve him

in the other world as they had served in this. And at stated times, beneath the oaks that were to these men the holiest trees, the fathers of the company, each for his own family, communed with his god, who was a male god. For in the wandering life that they had led, following their herds from grass to grass, women were of small account. All responsibility, all power rested on the muscle and the brain of man, and if they held the birth of children to be a mystery it was but a little one, no important thing compared with the avoidance of wild beasts and the management of horses and knowledge of the weather and how best to fight other wanderers. So, when their gods had issued from the trees, they were all males, all fathers. And in their worship each leader sought strength and succour for himself and for his wife and babes. Every night he killed a sheep, or better still an ox, and after he had put it on the fire, he shared it with his god, that both might feed, the one upon the flesh, the other upon the holy smell and savour that the flames and smoke carried to him, for the northern gods were of the sky, rulers of storm and fine weather. Yet these men had but little fear of gods and less of corpses, which were but empty things, their souls having departed in the pyre's smoke to other pastures. By the fires they feasted with their holy spirits, throwing the bones to the dogs that prowled about them, shepherds and hunters like themselves; and the chief's little son sat with the dogs and gnawed a bone that was somewhat juicier than theirs, and sucked the roots and berries that his sisters brought him and drank the cow's milk. And after he had eaten he slept under the wagon with his mother, two stitched hides covering them, while the patient horses cropped the grass and kept watch for their

masters. So the northern people went, riding by the light of day and resting in the darkness, which was the opposite of the southern wanderers' way, the forefathers of Abraham and Sarah, when they first poured out of the desert into Babylon. In that fierce land the sun's heat was the travellers' cruellest enemy, so that the Moon who led them towards the sea and wealth became their god. Yet to the desert riders also the high gods were male, and each leader of each family pictured a father like himself who ruled the heavenly caravan and made the young men and the women and the babes obey.

The barbarians rode towards the south, towards the rich cities of which they had heard tell, fat with food and gold and leisure. But this first band did not reach a comfortable haven. They were too few in number, too ignorant of the walls that they attacked, after the unfortified hill villages, and of the men that lived there and their ways of fighting. News of their coming had spread, and at the first towered city a storm of arrows checked them. Their horses took fright, their cattle scattered. Soon, on foot, in a half-circle about their wagons, even as bulls stand before their cows to save them, they were no longer attacking but attacked, and all their great size and long bronze swords and their contempt of death were of no avail. The little men, naked beneath their huge hanging shields, swarmed from the town; their arrows fell thick as water, while on the battlements strange beings jeered and shouted, women with uncovered breasts and full skirts and hats with ribbons.

The men died fighting and many of the women, even those who stayed beside the carts and tried, at

the last, to keep their enemies off with stones and then with their nails and teeth. The horses, also, those that had not fallen or fled away, had killed many men by kicking with their heels; and the dogs, too, had fought and lay bleeding by the wagons. But by evening all was over, and the chief's youngest son, alone in his cart, watched the victors scramble about him. He had seen the arrows fall on men and women and dogs and horses, had seen the herds fly in panic and his father slain. Now he saw his mother run from the man who came to take her; for though virgins were feared in that country, there was no ill-luck in raping matrons. Many of the mothers had strangled their children to keep them from the enemy's hands, and many now, seeing the men's will towards them, were strangling themselves, tying their hair to the poles of the carts and goading the oxen to ride on. They were for one man and one man only. Their fathers had given them to their husbands, together with the horse, the spear that were the holy things of roving and of fighting. The submission that a new girl gave her master was a very holy thing; to admit another was shame and sacrilege. So some were hanged and some were kicked to death and some were crushed beneath the wheels.

But the chief's wife, for very sorrow, had forgotten duty. She stood beside her husband's body; her face and hands were smeared with blood, for he had been among the last to fall and she had that moment risen from embracing him. When the man came to take her she ran towards the wagon, no doubt to kill her son before herself, as honour and custom bade her. But her pursuer was too close; in his hands were cords wherewith to bind and carry her away, that one of the

city's lords should have a strong slave and a fine lover. And the boy had cowered down; she could not see him. She took her knife and quickly, before her assailant touched her, thrust it in under her ribs.

The boy sat still, peeping beneath the hides. After his mother had dropped and the man had turned away, he crept from his hiding place and started out. The light was dim and many people and beasts moved here and there. Yet he found his father's body. He stretched himself beside its elbow and feigned death, lying quite still as he had seen certain animals do. In a little while, feeling hungry, he put his hand into the dead man's wallet. His father had often taken a piece of meat from there, or a hunk of cheese. But the wallet was empty, and he began to ache and tremble. And presently a man walked by and trod the boy's long hair into the miry, bloody earth, and he, in fear and rage, turned suddenly and put his teeth into the man's leg. The man bent down and stared at him in the half-darkness. "Ho, the little wolf," he said. But it seemed that he was not angry. He crouched before the boy and held him up and instead of blows gave him a drink out of a leather bottle. Whereupon the boy's eyes closed and he fell forward on to the man's shoulder and slept.

The boy was taken to Mycenae, the chief city in Greece at that time. It was named "golden" for its fine houses and broad streets, and for the treasure that its citizens had gathered and that was less only than the treasure hidden in the white-terraced palaces of Crete. Here in Mycenae, and in Tiryns on the coast and in many other towns of Argolis, the first northerners had settled, had learned to plough and

sow, to build ships and to live, vassals of a peaceful king, at peace with their neighbours. And they, in their turn, had taught the natives horsemanship and marriage, the binding of one woman to one man, with due oaths and sanctions. Many had accepted the new way, many had refused it. Here they dwelt now, rich and free among the ancient people, and traded with the countries round about and with the islands and especially with Troy across the sea and the coast south of Troy, whither other tribes of their own race had gone in years past and had settled and grown strong and wealthy on the gold they found there. And in Mycenae the boy saw tall bodies like his father's, and green eyes, and heard speech that he understood, although not easily. They called him Kyrion. His clothes and the heavy metal bracelet that he wore told them that he was of his people's leaders. Moreover he said so. Upon his thigh they pricked a little picture, colouring it with juices, after the manner of the southern race. The picture was in the likeness of a wolf. For it was not to the household of a northerner that Kyrion was carried but to that of a southern lord, to be the guardian and playmate of its master's infant daughter. Her name was Myrrha and she was younger than Kyrion by three years.

So he grew up among the descendants of Sophia and knew their worship of trees and stones. In those days the spirits were said to live, not only in the groves and in the cavern's rocks, but also in pillars that men had carved out of these things, in imitation of them. For that time the pillars were enough, though here and there were altars, hollowed or pierced to receive the blood, and ornamented sometimes with tokens of sacrifice. Images were made indeed, as of old—beasts

and birds and men and fish—but it was not said that the gods lived in them. As yet no spirit had thrust a man-like head out of the tree-trunks that the peasants set up in their orchards, no woman's breasts were on the rude blocks that they called mother. The gods still lurked unseen, the more terrible for their invisibility.

And from the first Kyrion hated them. He feared them also, but this he did not know. He understood only, as he came to years of thinking, that he loathed the blood-stained mothers, the murderous, murdered sons whom the people invoked with wine and madness. His companion, the child Myrrha, spoke of them with awe and reverence and something akin to love, and her devotion added to his wrath. One day, after she, being then seven years old, had been carried to the first of the maidens' rites, he stood alone in the courtyard of the house, and facing the household shrine, swore that presently he would slay these monstrous spirits. Those that he hated most were the fair girls and youths that Myrrha loved. But the cruellest were older beings, strange men and women, curious animals that lived in high caves and remote forests or across the sea. Musing on the best means of killing them, he heard, in fancy, Myrrha's voice. "You cannot shoot an arrow," she mocked. "You cannot steer a ship!" and it was true that his skill was slight in shooting and sailing, although in every other exercise, in running and wrestling and boxing, in riding and in the use of heavy arms, he was above his fellows. "I will kill them with my hands," he boasted, as though in answer to her. "I will swim all the way!" and he spat upon the ground, giving of himself to the earth, to strengthen the oath, for despite his hatred and his fear, he had learnt many of the natives' customs

and followed them. Beside the shrine a corn-jar rested. He went to it and thrust his bare arm deep into the trickling grain. He did this to satisfy his rage; then because the cool touch pleased him.

He was free to come and go, to fight, to play, to love, among the boys of his own age and kind. He was slave only to Myrrha. With her he went wherever men might go with women—about the steep hill-top city or down into the plain, to the games and dances that they shared, or to the musicians from whom she learnt, alone, the sacred music of the funerals and feasts, how to play the flute's little air, clear and soft beside the harsh, summoning trumpets, and how to clash the brass cymbals that were the most dreadful of the holy instruments and were used to call up the most dreadful goddess, the mother of the graves and serpents. At first, stout guardians walked beside the two, to protect them, but well before he was seventeen years old Kyrion's great height and big shoulders were sufficient. Sometimes, besides his knife and sword, he carried a fan, holding it over her head, and sometimes he carried Myrrha herself. This happened most often in the summer when Kyrion's master and his people went to another place, by the gulf, to northward. Always when Myrrha was a little child he had taken her down the rocks, had swum with her on his back. At fourteen years she still, at times, pretended that the stones were sharp or that she was tired, although at other times she would jump from rock to rock as nimbly as a goat, or swing herself out where branches overhung the waves and dive down as safely as if she were, as her wisdom bade her believe, part of the trees, the air, the water.

And now, being a man and fully grown, it troubled

Kyrion to hold her. For two years he had been to the spring feasts, had known women, drunk wine, exchanged such pleasantries and gestures with his comrades as were usual. But for those years Myrrha had been a child. Now, although she had not yet danced with the matrons, she, too, was full-grown. Kyrion had not noticed the change until a day, there by the sea, when he came upon her sleeping. She lay half-naked on the rocks; yet at the first sight of her it was not her body that appeared strange to him nor yet her nakedness, to which also he was accustomed; it was the sigh that seemed to hang upon her lips, the new heaviness that closed her eyelids, warming them with a delight that was not of a child that sleeps but of a woman waiting. She woke and smiled at him. Stretching herself, she said that she wished to swim again and bade him carry her to the water. And Kyrion, mumbling he knew not what, refused.

From that day onward he was careful not to touch her. He did not tell himself that he was afraid to do so, as a southern man would be. His feeling was reverence, he thought, such as she gave to the great mothers of her faith, such as he gave, in a corner of his heart, to the dim wife of his father's father-god. He remembered—and those among his friends who kept an echo of the ancient pastoral life remembered likewise—that the ruler of the oak was married, that a lovely though little heeded woman shadowed him. And though she was no more than a shadow, she was holy; she too, bore spear and shield; especial ceremonies, oaths and gifts, had made her wedding sacred. So Kyrion, faithful to all that he retained of childhood, adored a goddess who was wife and mother. The thought of her had helped him to accept, in public

worship, the kindlier of the people's mothers. And it was in her image that his heart, his thought, which foreign learning had confused, saw Myrrha. The girls he had caressed at the feasts were scarcely women in his eyes; they were no more to be revered than boys, than the night's sleep-demons.

For a while Myrrha watched him in astonishment, in anger. Then, for another while, she pretended to contempt, and her mockery, her scorn, wrung Kyrion's temper. For all the years that he had been her slave she had not assumed the shape of mistress so cruelly. They had been playmates; she had been gentle, kind; the laughter that came to her so easily had ever stopped before his blushes, and seeing him abashed, she had hastened to kiss and comfort him. Never before had she used such humbling tones or pulled his ears with such tweaking fingers or called him "yellow fool" so bitterly. One day she spoke the words before her father, before the whole household assembled at supper. And Kyrion jumped up and ran to his master. "Must I hear this?" he cried. "Must she insult me so?" "Not if you do not wish it," the other said. "But believe her, Kyrion, you are a yellow fool." His smile was more baffling than Myrrha's caprices.

Hot with shame and anger and a strange irritation that partook of anger yet had sadness in it, Kyrion went from the supper-hall. Unthinking, he strode towards the sea, leaving the river and its narrow gorge and the hillsides where flocks browsed beneath the trees. It was night and early summer. A black goat stood beneath an ancient olive tree; the moonlight shone on the rock behind it and on the grey leaves above. From beneath Kyrion's feet, as it seemed, a half-wild dog ran yelping towards the harbour. But in

the little bay where at dawn and evening Myrrha swam, there was no sound, no movement. Grass-green, transparent, the mists hung over the water. Kyrion climbed slowly down to the lowest stones and sat there, staring out.

He was aroused by a sharp cry, "Kyrion! Kyrion!" And before he well understood how she had come, how she had tripped on the high rocks, Myrrha was slipping, falling down into his arms. Because she might have killed herself in that steep place and because her helplessness soothed all his wounds, he held her tightly. Both were trembling as he carried her from the hard rocks to a bed of earth, that she might stretch herself more easily and see if she were hurt. He held her and she clung to him, and there were tears in her eyes, whether of remorse, or sharp fear relieved, or joy, thinking him lost, at finding him again. And this time Kyrion forgot his bashfulness. But later, as she lay beside him, her head upon his breast, something of it returned. He looked at her in perplexity, wondering if it were not an evil, dangerous thing that he had done. She was so young, so sweet; his father's god and the pale wife that was his goddess forbade a virgin to love without their sanction. Myrrha looked back into his face. "What troubles you, my Kyrion?" she said, whereupon he told her of his scruples and his fears. For a while she paid little heed. She smiled and stroked his cheeks and bade him remember that, to her gods, if they had done the same at the spring feasts it would have been most holy. "But not to mine!" he answered furiously, all the hatred that he felt for the dark spirits flooding over him. At the feast, he raged, she would have lain with any man; next year, maybe, although she was his lover,

she would embrace a score, and he would be a yellow fool indeed if he did not kill her. And at this Myrrha looked grave; he thought that she was frightened. She clasped him closely and swore that to-morrow if he wished she would marry him. And since, to him, the ceremonies of her easy goddesses would not be holiness enough, she would take him also in the stricter, narrower way of his own god. After that, she said, when she made her pilgrimages, he would go with her and keep all other men away. Smiling again, between laughter and sorrow, she took his head in her two hands. "You are jealous, my Kyrion," she said. "You do not believe I love you." Suddenly she jumped to her feet. "See," she cried. "I will take the oath now!" and snatching his knife out of his belt, she dug a hole in the ground and then ripped up her finger, and while the blood poured out, cut off a curl of hair and put it with the blood and a little spittle into the hole. So Myrrha, doing as Melitta had done, promised herself to the death goddess if she did not take Kyrion for husband and keep faithful to him, as his god willed, all her life.

CHAPTER II

In the autumn, after the wine-harvest, Kyrion and Myrrha were married. Washed in the water of holy springs, Myrrha was purified of evil, anointed with good; veiled beside Kyrion veiled, lest the eyes of harm, baleful spirits, should look on them in this holy hour, she walked beneath the sacred harvest-fan, the long basket in which the people tossed grain and cradled infants. Loaves were in it now, and emblems of marriage and fruits; and the boy who held it above their heads was the luckiest obtainable, having known no death in his house. The procession was at night-time, by the light of torches; in this and many other ways the mystic sowing ceremonies were recalled and the marriage of the god and goddess. Another boy carried boughs, another played upon a flute; two women bore the torches. Beside the hearth a brazen wheel was hung. A slave of Myrrha's spun it about, that its magic power should draw the bridegroom's love inevitably to his beloved and cause the power of the figs that Myrrha wore and that were flung at her, to be fulfilled.

So Myrrha obeyed her goddesses. But Kyrion would have other ceremonies also, rites that he had made himself, as best he could, from memories and from hints caught here and there. He swore no oath of faithfulness; whether of the north or of the south, a husband could love a slave, a concubine, if he pleased. He sought but to bind Myrrha and to obtain the blessing of the oak-tree. So a horse was given to Myrrha, and Kyrion seized it and her and rode with

them to the house; and later, at Kyrion's wish, Myrrha's father killed an ox, and having burned a part of it in offering to the father-god, made of the rest a solemn feast for himself and the lovers and their people. Lastly Kyrion, before he went into his bride's chamber, danced a dance. He took a small round shield that he had made, different from the shields of the southern people, and he took a spear; he put a metal cap upon his head, crested with a horse's mane, and he flung off his loin-cloth, and thus naked, leaped and ran and thrust as though in battle. But this was a notion of his own, which he performed to please himself, and not, so far as he knew, the custom of any country.

Next day gifts were brought to Myrrha, bracelets and necklets of wrought gold and copper, looms and fine flax for her weaving, garments gay with Eastern colours and patterns; and pots from the islands, the loveliest in shape and ornament, and boxes of antimony with which to paint her eyes, and flasks of perfume and of oils, and furniture for her houses and her farms. And now, according to the law whereby the land was held by women, her father made over to her the estates of which he had been steward. Actually she got but half, and the leaner half, a fortress town in stony Attica, where olives and vines and figs flourished but corn was scarce. The fat lands in Argolis her father would administer until his death. Yet Kyrion was happy. His marriage made him a prince indeed, and he was well content to leave Mycenae and try his hand upon a harder soil, a less ease-loving people.

So he went with Myrrha to Attica and lived there in a stone house among the olive trees of Kephisos, which is the river that runs beside the city and the

fort of Athens. Within two years two children were born to them, first a boy, as was fit, and then a girl. And at the boy's birth Kyrion rejoiced, for the child, although brown-haired, had his father's grey-blue eyes and square head. But when the girl opened her plum-coloured eyes at him he was sorry. He had dreamed that his princedom, the farms and groves of Attica, the fine palaces of Mycenae, would be the heritage of a blond woman, tall and blue-eyed like his own mother.

Before the girl was weaned, news came whereby it seemed that there would be no heritage for any one. Throughout those years, waves of barbarians had ridden from the north. Some had been thrown back, some, like Kyrion's people, had been slain, some had made homes and settled. But now a mightier force than had ever been seen, with countless horses, countless wagons, an army plentiful as the sea waves was flowing southward. The half-savages of the border, the men of northern Epirus and Thessaly, among whom, the people said, were many with horses' legs and tails, monsters and very lecherous—these had joined the invaders. And like reeds before the flood the men and towns of Greece were falling. The first that Kyrion knew of the invasion was from the travellers that poured into Attica, taking refuge from the storm. Then, one morning in early spring, he learnt that all the lesser towns about Boetian Orchomenus were lost, that Orchomenus itself was falling and that Thebes and Athens and Mycenae would soon be threatened. Kyrion strode about his hall, half in distress and half in exaltation. "Alas, our vineyards," sighed Myrrha. "Alas for the gardens where we played, and the courtyards, and the holy images and pictures . . ."

"They may be my brothers," Kyrion said. "Who can say? I shall see big men again. I shall know what it is to fill my hands when I fight or when I hold a friend. I shall see splendid horses!" Myrrha was silent. Her daughter was at her breast; her son was sleeping.

But though his heart leaned towards the northmen, their speech, their gods, Kyrion did not make them welcome. Whether the lands in Argolis were kept or lost, the lands beside the river Kephisos were his; Myrrha was his and so were his children. He had no thought of yielding them to any brother. Moreover, he had grown to like Attica, its fortress townships, stuck firm as the roots of their own fig-trees in the stony hills and plain; the Athenian stronghold, whose king, following the will of his forefather Cecrops, forbade women to have many husbands or to slaughter youths, maidens, children in the ceremonies. The people pleased him, a hardy, reason-loving folk, stout fighters and safe herdsman. There were many among the princes with whom he gladly drank and wrestled and talked of the days, presently to come, when they and the sons of Cecrops would attack their common over-lord King Minos, and kill him and make Attica a land of free cities. So it happened that when the northerners, the Achæans, drew near, Kyrion set Myrrha and his children in the citadel of Athens, and rode with the other princes to fight.

The Achæans were routed. They said that no man would be so foolish as to risk death to win the ugly soil of Attica; they had not truly sought to take those weedy fields, those thin-shanked cattle. The Athenians, on the other hand, swore that it was their hard muscles, stony as their land, that had thrashed the enemy from

the brave towns he coveted. No doubt the Theban cities helped them. However this may be, the sons of Cecrops, with Kyrion and the Attic men, drove off the invaders. And Kyrion, when the battle was over, had his fill of looking at fair faces and fine horses. He grasped many hands also, for it was already known that although the men of Thessaly, famed for their monstrous centaurs, made havoc everywhere, the true northerners had not destroyed the lands they seized, had not enslaved or plundered widely. And so, from policy, the southern men were moderate likewise.

Among the prisoners were a maiden and a youth so young that Kyrion took especial pity on them. They could be but twelve years old, he thought. The girl had been snatched out of a retreating wagon. A soldier had caught her by her long hair, braided as was proper in a virgin; she had been dragged backward, along the ground. And the boy, it seemed, seeing her lost, had turned back to try and save her. He had been taken as easily as a cockerel chick. Kyrion had not done the taking, but later, when the division was made of prisoners and arms and horses, he claimed the two. He questioned them, his tongue fumbling with the once familiar words, and learnt that they were not brother and sister but cousins. The girl smiled at him. It gave him a strange sensation, half-pride, half-shame, to see her. From beneath his yellow fringe, the boy scowled angrily.

The greater bulk of the triumphant army returned to Athens. The prisoners and the spoils went with it. But Kyrion chose to remain with the few who followed the fugitives, to keep watch on the isthmus and to send back news and maybe to fight again, now and then.

And Myrrha, when she received her husband's gifts and his message that she should tend the northern children like her own, bowed her head and sighed a little, seeing that Kyrion's heart was nearer to war than loving. She looked at the girl Clytè and sighed again. For continence was not customary among the Attic men. She wondered how many years would bring the girl's breasts to roundness and her belly to breeding yellow babes for Kyrion. Yet for her love's sake she stroked the child's hair and herself combed and washed it and that of the boy Hippias, until both heads shone like metal. Indeed to have them washed and made sweet with oils and perfumes was her first concern, for they were very dirty and full of vermin. It made her smile, while the slaves scrubbed and scraped, remembering Kyrion's flushes, to see how furiously the boy blushed, thus to be handled by the slave-women.

Next day she found for them tutors and nurses that they might be taught to speak and move, to play the Athenian games and bow before the gods, like other children. And because she wished to please Kyrion and because his absence made her heart empty, she spent long hours with them herself, learning their speech and trying to teach it to her son. Every evening they sat together. They ate little fish fried in oil and dipped in honey, almonds crushed with honey and dried fruits; they drank the sweetened wine. And sometimes the Eastern dancers danced for their amusement, or Thracians, best of musicians, played upon the lyre, or jugglers or acrobats performed their antics. But more often it was the story-teller who stood before them and recited his tales of Attica and its glories and its gods. The tutor whom Myrrha

had hired and who had knowledge of the northern tongue, translated the stories for the children. In this way Hippias and Clytè learned of Athens and of Erechtheus, the city's hero Son, who was child of the woman Earth and of Hephæstus, the hidden, Eastern mountain fire, and who was nursed by the holy maidens and fought and died in corn-giving Eleusis. They learned too, of Cecrops, the first king, who built the town and made its laws and set up in its shrines a mighty snake, holy and venerable. For snakes were sacred in Athens, no doubt because of the snakes of the chasm, of the underworld, of death, that Sophia and Melitta had known. They were divinity—sometimes in sober, law-giving shape, and sometimes wild, youthful, drunken, like the snake god that haunted the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the lands where also the fiery Hephæstus lay hidden and where Mount Ida mirrored the Mount Ida of Crete. And snakes were ghosts and the children of ghosts, dead ancestors and heroes and their offspring. Erechtheus had been a snake, and Cecrops half of one.

The boy listened most willingly to tales of fighting and conquest, of the long war that ended in the death of Erechtheus and the treaty whereby Athens left the Eleusinian Plain in peace and received its corn. But Clytè liked better the stories of holy Eleusis itself, of how Deo had come thither from her dead lover in Crete, and how her daughter, Persephone, picking the flowers, had been ravished away into the underworld, and of Deo's grief and search for her and their reunion.

Spring yielded to summer, summer to autumn, autumn to winter. And still Kyrion had not returned. A treaty had been made between Athens and the northmen; for that time they were not enemies. But

Kyrion and a number of the younger princes, with their men, had gone in pursuit of a band of robbers, murderers, whom war and the hope of pillage had spread, wolf-like, over the country. They were chasing them, so rumour said, to northward. Myrrha had returned to her house beside the river. She had slaves to wait on her, guards to protect her home; under her guidance the serfs worked well in the olive groves, brought in the sheep and goats safely; her women wove their webs tightly and without fault; her children grew in beauty. But she wept. "Kyrion! Kyrion!" she cried, twisting and stretching out her arms. The girl Clytè watched her in wonder. "Would you not weep if Kyrion were your husband?" Myrrha asked. "No," said the girl. "I would wait, and play with Hippias." For the first time for many days Myrrha laughed.

In mid-winter, Kyrion being still abroad, Myrrha made ready for the holy mountain feast. Clytè was to go with her, having fasted and prepared herself as a maid should. For though the girl was too young to share the mystery, she could yet come into the woods and know its first teaching, lie in the dark and feel the cold and hear the night's howlings. There would be no human death. In other lands and cities the ancient rites were not changed. In Thrace and at Orchomenus infants were torn and eaten, in other places a youth, the priest-king of the orgy, was thus slain, and in others, again, a maiden. For here the god was a young child, and here a youth, and here a virgin. But in Athens, by the decree of Cecrops, the divine victims were kids, fawns, young beasts of all kinds. The women went alone; no man dared pry upon, no man dared approach their holy ravings. For two years

Myrrha had gone to such festivals with little will. She knew that in her home Kyrion's face was black with hatred of their sanctities; her happiness had needed no more of virtue than love gave it. And indeed in the years before she loved she had felt but dimly the holiest, most inspired trances; her body and her mind had not been bound together in truest ecstasy, in mystic oneness with the god. Now, lacking Kyrion, she craved for this other joy.

So for many days she fasted. Continence was already hers, yet, for greater safety, she took leaves of the tree named "chaste," kin to the soothing leaves of the verberna, and stewed them and drank the potion, that the very image of Kyrion should be banished from her bed. Often she bathed and often she drank juices of buckthorn, to purge herself. And upon the day of sacrifice she killed many kids and clad herself in their skins, assuming the semblance of the god.

When the night came and they set out towards the mountains she took with her, alive, another kid, clasping its holiness to her breasts that were scarcely dry from feeding children. Clytè went more warmly wrapped in sheep-skins, for the night was cold. She stared, astonished, at Myrrha and the other holy women whom they discovered in the sacred glen, upon the hillside. Each priestess bore in her arms a kid, a lamb, a little wolf, and seemed to suckle it, the infant god. Some had serpents coiled about them; those of a lesser holiness held burning torches, or cymbals whose music was the Mother Mountain's summons and her Son's thunder-cry. Crowns of ivy were on their heads; ivy was on the wands they carried, and already many of them, waiting in the glen, chewed the ivy that hung upon the trees, so that their eyes, made bright in

their pale hollowed cheeks by fasting and approaching joy, grew brighter with intoxication. There was no wine. In the ancient days of the god's first birth, when he was indeed a babe and a great flame, bursting from the mountain, wine was unknown, hence now forbidden. The holy women did not need it. All were assembled. With the young girls, Clytè cowered down beneath a rock, drawing her sheep-skins close about her shoulders.

A shout broke from the women, and they were gone, rushing furiously up the hillside. Wild with the wildness of the ivy and her strong desire, Myrrha leaped faster and higher than the rest. Beneath her feet the dry leaves crackled, above her head the branches, swaying in the wind, moaned uneasily. But soon they left the wood; the naked sky, quivering with sharp, winter starlight, stretched over them. And it seemed to Myrrha, as she sprang from rock to rock, that in truth a strength, a lightness was in her that was not of woman. About her, her companions ran and jumped, shouted, waved their torches, tore at their breasts and throats, already frantic in their god-like, beast-like ecstasy. And catching fire from their fire, spreading even as theirs spread, the madness that was in Myrrha's body lit her mind. Before her was a hollow in the hill and a broad, out-thrust rock. To her eyes a great light played about it, a flame unknown to that land yet real, to her, as the new fire that would presently be born out of the sky, out of her womb. For she was become the sky, the mountain. Yet she was a kid running to its dam. The flame, which was afar off, flowed about her, more delicious than the love of Kyrion. And it, also, was the divinity. And at last, as she drew near to the sanctuary, the new rapture

seized her; she felt the god quicken in her breast, the kid she carried, Eriphos-Dionysos, her own heart. The women danced their last excessive passion. Their cymbals clashed, and for the last time they leaped, uttering a cry so terrible that Clytè and her companions, down in the glen, trembled and hid their heads, knowing it for the summons to the god, the sign of his approach. And Myrrha leaped with the women. She, too, lifted the god aloft; she tore, she sucked, she flung herself face downward on the ground. She was the god. Her lips pushed out like a kid's lips, she drank milk from the dry earth.

The return was sober yet no less happy. At one with the god, possessing life yet lost in it, a drop of water in a joyful sea, Myrrha walked beside her sisters. Gravely she held the holy wand that was more powerful, she thought, than the forked twig that had made many a man king in rainless Attica, the water-diviner's rod, the magician's sceptre. She had but to strike the earth and springs would run, pure water, wine or milk. She was so sure of this that she did not make the gesture. The wand's end, tipped with a pine-cone and wreathed with ivy, would drip, if she willed, with honey. The torches were extinguished; the sun was risen. Its palour shone on the women's pale, serene faces, gleamed in their unseeing eyes. In the glen they paused, and Myrrha signed to Clytè to rise and follow her. To the girl, her quiet, her silence, her rapt look, stained as she was with blood and earth and ivy juices, were stranger than the frenzy of the night before. So, in silence and delight, Myrrha returned to her house and slept.

CHAPTER III

Kyrion returned soon after. The biting of the wind and cold on his fair skin, the beard he wore, clipped to his chin that it might not offer too easy a handle to an enemy, made him seem many years older. He had gained in girth and spirit. He was very tired, having ridden all that day without pause. He embraced Myrrha, held her long and close, as though she were, in truth, all rest, all comfort. He ate the meal of beef and loaves and wine that she provided, saying little, save that he was well and happy to be home. He showed her and the children his wounds, but did not speak of the tall woman who had helped to heal them. "The Achæans fight as I like to fight," he said. "Body to body." And then he slept.

Next day he learnt that Myrrha had been to the mountain feast and had taken Clytè with her, and at once fell into a rage. While Myrrha, looking for caresses, sighed and twisted her hands about, he stormed at her, shouting that the winter rites were horror and depravity, that she should not have gone, should not have bidden a northern virgin witness such abominations. And Myrrha stared aghast; never before had he been so boldly wroth. For a moment, picturing a world wherein the holy ceremonies were not, without crops or children, bereft of the very sun, which, lacking blood and fire, would surely remain hidden, she could have screamed with terror. But it came back into her mind that Kyrion had no knowledge, he could not understand such holy matters.

So, gravely, she answered that she had but done her necessary duties. If he wished it, she said, she would cease to instruct the girl Clytè. But Kyrion raged on. It was not the killing that shocked him, the blood, the feast; it was the excessive passion and the communion with the dark, unseen, unknown power. "Is not your house-shrine enough?" he cried. "And the tree that you can feed decently in your own garden?" Myrrha could but repeat that she had done her duty. Yet, thinking to please him, she added presently that she had been lonely, had missed her beloved; which was a word too much, for it is always foolish to give two reasons for an action.

At this Kyrion broke out more loudly than before. Did she then want more, he asked, than children and slaves and looms, kitchens and gardens, to keep her hands and her heart faithful to him? Would she soon seek lechery also? And Myrrha answered, "That is true. I might have stayed at home and played with Hippias, as Clytè said." And suddenly she laughed, and Kyrion's anger rose to such a height that for the first time he hit her, and then, turning to where Clytè and Hippias gaped at their quarrelling, struck the girl also, very fiercely. The boy did not cool Kyrion's anger by going white and chewing at his lips. No one knew if he was moved on Clytè's account or Myrrha's. And Myrrha was not sure if Kyrion's greatest anger was for her going to the feast or for her taking Clytè.

And it was not her husband's blow that hurt her chiefly. Like a precipice opening before her feet, she saw her loss if Kyrion hated her. Next day she went to Athens, to a procession in honour of the Mother and the Maid that was held there. Each city, besides its chief Mother and chief Son, had drawn out of the

multitude of daughters one mightiest Daughter. On her return she found Kyrion quieted. Perhaps he had feared that she would not come back again; perhaps he was ashamed of his new violence. For many days, however, he did not speak gently to her, he did not caress her. And being the more loving, Myrrha was the keener sufferer.

But soon peace and love were restored between them. By reason of the talents he had displayed in war, his stout fighting and careful leadership, Kyrion's name was much increased in Attica. In the council of the princes, when the heads of the cities assembled to speak of matters—war or trade or justice—that concerned them all together, his word was taken willingly. The princes were cousins; all were related through their mothers or their wives. Kyrion's claim to kinship, depending on Myrrha who was not wholly of that land, was thinnest; but he had shown himself so true a comrade of the princes, so faithful a shepherd of his men, that none denied it. Moreover, in the cities' speech with the Achæan chiefs, now kings of Mycenæ and Tiryns, Kyrion's advice was the wisest. He had recovered the northmen's tongue; he knew their customs and their ways of thinking. So, with his visits to the councils and his work among the olive-groves, gathering the fruit and pressing it and despatching the huge oil-jars, Kyrion was busy. And mingling more closely with the cities' life and finding praise there, it seemed he grew more tolerant. When, in the spring, Myrrha went to the feast of fruitfulness, by the marshes, below Athens, he went with her. He waited with the other husbands while she and her sisters, in the sanctuary, beheld the holy marriage of the god and goddess.

Yet Myrrha was afraid. Often as the years passed, as her little children became big and Clytè and Hippias grew to womanhood and manhood, she wept secretly. It was not only for herself she grieved, in dread lest Kyrion's hatred of her gods would split her life, but for a greater sundering. With the strength, that increased each day, of the Achæans and their father-god, with the spreading of their thoughts, which were Kyrion's, she feared for the ancient goddesses themselves, for their Sons and Daughters, the dark rites that held for her everything that was wise and true and holy. For although the northmen had not conquered every land, although, west of Mycenæ, the Arcadians and their Son, Hermes, god of travellers and flocks and shepherds, still held their hilly country, and to the east, Thebes and Athens were untouched, elsewhere they were supreme. They had the Tiryns ships and were preparing, Myrrha heard, to attack Crete and King Minos himself. And all about her, even here in Athens, the people, seeing such marvels, were saying that the gods of these men who were so numerous, so bold and so successful, must be strong gods. So, to let no hope of luck slip by, they were adopting the northern father-god and his cheerful worship. By an easy shift they chose to see many of their greatest Sons, their most famous heroes, as father-gods. The change was not great, and in every case they were hardened to borrowing; not a god or goddess came out of Asia or the islands, sooth-sayer god, smith-god, sun-god, goddess of battle or of love, but found in Greece a tree, a rock, a stream for home. The groves and shrines and pillars, ever plentiful, were now all about the land, for the people still thought as much and as often of their gods as of themselves. And for

good reason, since their lives, as they supposed, depended on them. So the oak-god was welcomed. And the holy men and women of Mycenæ, wisest of the wise, whose lives and fortunes had been spared by their new masters, by argument encouraged the new faith. They said that since the time of the birth of gods was passed, the oak-fathers, shapers of fine soldiers, must needs have been among men from the beginning. Were there not rain-makers? The oak-kings were givers of all rain. Were there not fathers? The oak was father of the gods and men. Thus it happened that in time of drought in Athens Myrrha saw a priest perform the ancient ceremonies that gave rain in the name of the Achæan Sire. And she wept. To see the holiest rites used for the glory of an upstart god was worse than to see her own Sons praised in vulgar feasting.

Everywhere was change. In Dodona, in an ancient tree that had been the sanctuary of the Earth Mother, whose leaves had interpreted dreams by their sweet rustlings, whose doves had uttered oracles for the goddesses, the new god reigned for no reason save that the tree itself was an oak. In Athens some said—though not yet all—that the great snake was a father. Kyrion, in all the councils, spoke of the god thus and would have his fellows do the same and make offerings to the snake after the northern fashion. Already, by persuasion, he had brought many to half-acceptance of his way of thinking. He did not speak against the Great Goddess; he would but have the princes mingle, with their fear of her, reverence for the oak-father. Yet his words, more than anything, grieved Myrrha. She was not consoled to know that in Argolis the Achæans, in their turn, were learning to adore the

Mother. Indeed the news enraged her, for the road whereby the northmen had come to their new faith was by declaring that the ancient people's goddess, the mighty ruler of life and death, was in fact no other than the wife of their god, the shadowy warrior queen that Kyrion had loved. To her, Myrrha was told, they were bringing offerings of corn and wine—she to whom wine, delicious to northern ignorance, was blasphemy—to her they were bowing in their shallow, thoughtless worship. Such rites, empty of mind and feeling, Myrrha thought, would soon leave the fields barren and the world childless. For to her wisdom it was the virtue that man brought, the movements of his soul and body, that, in communion with the god, gave power.

Yet at times she was less despondent. It eased her heart to think that the Achæans, even in their slight manner, held the gods of the soil sacred. And it was true that although they would have nothing of the ceremonies of the night, of killing and of fear, of blood and darkness, the northmen were respectful of the ancient customs. For themselves they had, as yet, no public rites; each man was king, father, priest in his own household. Yet what they saw about them, both of gold and wisdom, made them astonished. The ghosts of those who could create such wealth, who could make and carve such weapons, build such ships and houses, weave such robes, must have great power. And sometimes, too, strange things happened, making them wonder and tremble a little. And at this time Myrrha rejoiced, her hopes raised by every seed of terror set in the cold, brave hearts of her enemies. There was a prince in Tiryns—Kyrion brought back the tale from the palace itself, where he had gone to speak

with the chieftains of the assault they planned on Crete, on Knossos, and in which certain of the Attic princes were, perhaps, to join them. A priest of the great Mother had come before the prince. He knelt in supplication, crowned and carrying his leafy bough. But the prince became angry. He leaned forward and slapped the priest across the mouth, striking so violently that his hand was cut. The wounds were slight; at once water was brought and herbs to bathe and purify them. But day followed day and they did not close. Poison was in them, a mighty spell. And the prince sent for healers, some from Argolis, whom Kyrion did not trust, he said, because they were of the same race as the poisoner, and some from distant cities who had no interest in the matter and who, if gold could give wisdom, would surely have found a remedy. Still the strange poison lingered, making the whole man sick. Now the hand was withered, horrible to behold. The priest did not die; nor was he killed, lest worse befall. "He put an evil on the prince," said Myrrha, "through the power of the goddess." And this time Kyrion made no protest. It seemed that he, too, could be afraid of men who lived healthy, harbouring on their lips ghosts of a deadly poison.

Such tales made Myrrha happy; hearing them she looked more trustfully to the time when the Achæans, maybe, would do as the first barbarians had done and accept the ancient gods fully. But the time was long in coming. Meanwhile each year brought greater changes. Now, in Argolis, she learned, beside the trees and pillars, wooden images of the gods had risen up, though whether the priests and craftsmen had formed them of themselves, of their own desire, or to satisfy their new masters, no man knew. The image-

makers were from Crete, whence came all the ablest artists. But the images pleased the northmen greatly. They had no inner eye wherewith to picture what they fancied. They were a bold, generous, crafty, positive people. No doubt, Myrrha told herself, they had asked a thousand times a day, as Hippias had asked of her as a child: "What face has the goddess? Are her eyes large or small? Is she as tall as thus, or thus?" For hitherto, although statues and pictures of the gods were common in Egypt and the East, in Greece they were unknown. Only little figures made of clay or cut on seals or gems, hinted at the mystery. Now all men could look upon divinity. And thus revealed it seemed less strange, less terrible. Out of a wild pear-tree, sacred to the Mother, the artificers had shaped the first goddess, and with offerings of corn and meat, with libations of new wine, the Achæan king had set it up in his palace. After that others were made for those who wanted them.

One day, when they had been some ten years married, Kyrion brought an image of this kind to Myrrha. He had been again to Argolis. The first attack on Crete had failed. The fleet of Minos was yet too strong for the raw northmen. But they had not given up their plans, nor had the Attic princes ceased their plotting. So Kyrion went back and forth. And when the enemy was not of Attica he joined the Achæans and fought with them. This time he came to Myrrha somewhat humbly. Before his journey, as Myrrha had foreseen many years earlier, he had loved Clytè, and he knew that now, almost certainly, Myrrha would have discovered that loving. So, to please her, he had brought back the image. Myrrha answered his kisses joyfully. She knew that Clytè was about

to bear a child; she knew that Kyrion was its father. But always when Kyrion's arms were round her she was so filled with love for him that there was no room for any other passion. Still holding her, he looked into her face. Smiling a little ruthfully she said : " Everything is well, Kyrion, since you still love me."

But at the sight of the image sharp anger seized her. In her eyes it was an uncouth, ugly thing; beside her inner vision of the goddess it was a desecration. The slaves had set it in the courtyard of the house, a wooden block, out of which rose, part of the tree-trunk that had given it birth, the half-body of a woman. Myrrha clapped her hands over her face. She could not look at it; indeed she feared that some evil spirit was in the big eyes that glared so blandly, in the hand that held a pomegranate, the Son's sacred fruit, with such a grasping, claw-like gesture. And Kyrion, between distress at hurting her and bitter disappointment, was again enraged. The image seemed to him strange and holy. Its heavy shape was that of a northwoman, his dimly remembered mother; its short straight nose and long-drawn eyes were Myrrha's. Once again his hatred of the ancient gods and Myrrha's obstinacy swept over him and he cried out at her, calling her a fool and unloving, ungrateful, blind, a wilful perverter of good things, a wanton destroyer of his peace. And Myrrha answered that she had loved more truly than he and had done less to break their life. Once again, as Clytè hurried forward to greet him, Kyrion could have struck the girl, he knew not why.

Myrrha took the figure and put it in her garden. Secretly that night, slipping from Kyrion's bed, she washed it, burned sacred herbs before and about it,

to expel its evil. The moonlight and the shadows of the cypress trees made strange patterns on the thoughtless face, on the breasts that were thrust a little outward, like her own. And because the night air blew cool upon her face and because Kyrion had thought of her in Argolis, she smiled. Then, returning to her chamber, she took a black stone that she had, an image of the Mother and especially holy, for it had fallen from heaven, and kissed it, weeping.

CHAPTER IV

Clytè's son was born in summer. His hair was yellower even than his mother's—golden, the Chaldean star-gazers would have said, as the sun that ruled over his birth. Myrrha helped the girl in her pains and afterwards did what was needful for the child, washed it in water to make it clean and holy, rubbed it with oil and wine and garlic to make it strong. When the holy dangerous days were over she carried it round the hearth, giving it to the ghosts of the house and of security, and laid it also before the Mother, to receive her blessing. Clytè lay meek and happy. She loved Kyrion and she loved Myrrha, obeying her in everything; in her thoughts she walked the dark, southern ways that Myrrha had shown her. But after the child had been put into her arms she loved it only, and whereas Myrrha, being a mother, had remained a wife, Clytè was mother only—to Kyrion's discomfiture. Throughout the day she sat nursing the boy, smiling over him, crooning the songs of Mother Cybele, who comforts little children. Myrrha told her that such constant dandling was foolishness. Through her hands and arms her woman's soul would flow into the boy, making him, later, instead of man an echo of woman.

But while Clytè, who was Kyrion's lover, put little pain between Myrrha and her lord, Hippias, who did nothing, brought strife and bitterness. Hippias was become sullen-tempered. As a boy he had obeyed Myrrha and Kyrion indifferently; as a man he followed Kyrion to his labours and his worship and

often to battle, to the raids that the Athenians made upon the lesser islands, or the expeditions of the Achæans against the Arcadian plunderers. He was strong in wrestling, which was an especially northern practice, and he rode faster than Kyrion. "He loves but horses," Kyrion said. With Myrrha and Clytè, with all women, he was silent and, as it seemed, careless.

But in her heart Myrrha knew that Hippias loved her. So it happened that when Clytè's son was three years old and Kyrion, seeking a husband for her, spoke of Hippias, Myrrha made no answer. But to herself she said, "He will not have her." And so it was. Hippias refused to take his cousin to wife, and when Kyrion pushed him for his reasons, turned silently away, so that Kyrion was puzzled. It could not be, he thought, that the young man refused from jealousy, from dislike of fathering his lord's son. Such fatherhoods, such marriages, were common. A dowerless youth must needs be glad, be grateful, to receive a portion and a wife at his chief's hands. Myrrha had offered Hippias a house, land of his own, if he would wed Clytè. But again he had turned silently away, blushing as though in shame or anger. "Yet he shall have the house," Myrrha said. "It will be better if he lives alone and gets a wife of his own choosing." The gift displeased Kyrion but he could not prevent it. According to the law, a wife could give a man all that she had, if she chose, and herself with it, and even if her first husband killed the second he would still have to persuade her stubbornness before he got her and her fortune back. And to persuade Myrrha against her will was a thing that Kyrion could not do. The love that persisted between them, though she was near

to thirty and was growing soft of flesh, was made half of the delight they found together and half of conflict.

The gift, the young man's refusal of Clytè, his sullen ways, which after he went to the farm that Myrrha had given him beyond the river grew sullener—these perplexed Kyrion deeply. He did not suspect the young man's love. All his life he had felt jealousy of Myrrha, fear of some lewdness that was in her, he thought. In every quarrel he remembered that she had given herself wantonly to him, without her father's or the god's sanction. That Clytè and many other virgins should have done the same, seemed of no importance. Clytè wearied him. She was becoming soured with the years, absorbed in her child and in her devotion to the Great Goddess, which increased as Kyrion's love failed. Yet she went seldom to the ceremonies; her link with the Mother and the Son was made of dreams, visions, solitary ecstasies. But always Kyrion had felt that something of Myrrha's body, whose ardours he knew well, went to her worship. He had been jealous first of the gods, then of the men and youths she looked on. All except Hippias, who was, Kyrion said, like a young brother, like a son.

With the first wealth that came to him, Hippias bought gifts for Myrrha, tokens of a seemly gratitude. He brought her new hives of earthenware for her bees and a brass lock and key to replace one broken on a byre door. These useful things astonished Kyrion; they displayed a knowledge, in Hippias, of Myrrha's wants, that he had not suspected. And Myrrha was as happy with her lock, whose fashion was new to her, as if she had been a child and it a doll with strings to jerk it. Again and again she turned and drew back

the key, lifted the pegs. Kyrion, who often brought her gifts, had seldom seen her more delighted.

And in the autumn Hippias bade her come, as was fitting also, with Kyrion and her slaves and workmen, to his wine-harvest, to eat the first bunch of grapes and kill the victim in the name of the Great Goddess and so make his vintage safe and holy. This was a rustic festival. In the winter, when the jars in which the wine was set after the first pressing were first opened, the people performed other ceremonies, with sports and stone-throwing and bull-fighting and a feast, eaten by the holy women alone. In these solemn rites were mingled, with the sanctities of Deo, the revels of the wine-Son, who was a new god yet ancient, since the madness that he gave was old and since he, too, was a tree and child of the Earth Mother. But the gathering and pressing of the grapes, last of the summer fruits, was a time chiefly of laughter, its feast a matter of harvest pleasure and fulfilment.

So, in the vineyards above the house of Hippias, on the hillside, Myrrha came, and the folk of the two households assembled, all save Clytè, who chose to stay at home, saying that she needed no wine to help her see her gods. A goat that strayed among the vines, lifting its lips to them, was caught, and Myrrha killed it, for it was the god, and took its blood and smeared it on the wooden pillar that was in the midst of the vineyard and that was the god likewise. It was a tree and symbol of the vine itself; branches still sprouted from the top of it. Meanwhile the slaves had made a pyre of fig-wood, and Myrrha laid the goat's carcase on the pyre, and as it was consumed she ate the god's flesh in the first bunch of grapes and rubbed the juice on her breasts and on the pillar. She

was the Earth Mother, the pillar vine-tree was her son. Then with a shout, the people and Hippias and Kyrion ran to pick the grapes. Many of the men pranced absurdly, making as though they too were goats and brothers of the god. Some had painted their faces red and some had stuck vine-leaves on their cheeks, over the paint; their noses thrust out from the green mask in a manner that made the women roll with laughter. Myrrha, resting and watching beneath a tree, was merry as any. The laughter grew louder still after a while, when the same goat-dancing men trod out the first grapes in the troughs, while the flute-players piped and the women and the children brought out images, forms of men and women that they had made in many substances, wood and barley-meal, and moved them here and there. A young musician, dancer and pipe-player, whom Hippias had fetched from Athens with a troop of dancing-girls, led the revels and the jests.

Kyrion would have laughed more if Myrrha had not laughed so much. Presently she rose and danced also. Her curls tossing on her breasts, she jumped as lightly as a girl; her eyes shone as clear, Kyrion thought, as they had done in the days in Argolis when just such feasts had seemed to him uncouth and evil.

But he had grown in a measure accustomed. Evening came, and in the cool stone hall of the house, that smelt of apples stored away and straw and goat's milk and dung, for the dairy and the stables were nearby, they tasted the sweet must, Myrrha first and then all the company. But again, though Kyrion liked to hear the flutes and to see the girls dance, while he ate the food that Hippias gave them and drank now, from the tall pitchers, wine of four or five years' standing, he would have liked the entertainment better

if Myrrha had not appeared so joyful. At this season drunkenness was not customary. Indeed it was not common at any time in Attica, save at the greatest festivals. The people were of sober inclination and put much water in their little cups. Yet though the madness of the god came upon no one, it seemed to Kyrion that many were near to it. Myrrha lay more loosely upon her couch, her hands played with her kerchief and her flowers with less precision than was usual. He himself drank his wine unmixed and from a vast, northern drinking-horn. As for Hippias, he had lost his sullenness altogether. He lay on the ground at Myrrha's feet; he was smiling and at ease. His gaze was turned towards the dancers, but he was not looking at them. Rather he stared at some inner picture of his own that was as pleasing as the sight of horses running or the chariots of the Achæans turning in their chariot race. Now the musician sang, and Kyrion felt a heat, half of strong wine and half of anger, rise in him. For the song was of Myrrha, her beauty and her grace, and how she was in truth the autumn goddess, not a hard girl whose heart is sheathed in ignorance as tough and sour as an unripe apple rind, but a woman soft and wise and yielding, sweet as harvest fulness. "The children love you," he sang, "and the maidens and the young men. Husbands are plentiful as fish." At the end, Myrrha laughed and threw the singer a wreath she wore, a sacred thing, since wreaths and crowns and palms were of the goddess and served to make their wearers part of her; yet seemingly not so sacred to Myrrha to-night, whether because the feast was of grapes, unknown to the ancient mothers, or because she was, as Kyrion feared, half-intoxicated. But more than her

reward, which was ordinary on such occasions, the movement that Hippias made astonished Kyrion. As the singer took the wreath and put it on his neck and kissed his hands to Myrrha, Hippias jumped up and ran to him, and pretending to play, pulled the wreath this way and that until it was destroyed. Kyrion stared. The act was strange, he thought, and yet not strange. In just such a way would he, fifteen years before, have sought to keep Myrrha's wreath from the same low, rascally contact. Indeed, had he not feared ridicule, he would have snatched it away himself, now. And a new thought began to stir in Kyrion's heart, so that he no longer saw the girls spin and twist or stand upon their hands, and bending backward till their bodies arched from ground to ground, balance the drinking cups upon their breasts and bellies. He thought that perhaps Hippias loved Myrrha.

He passed the night with Myrrha and their children in the house. The young man had given them his own chamber, his own bed. But while Myrrha slept, Kyrion, kept restless by his new fear, rose and returned to the hall. It was half in his mind to spy on Hippias, though what he could discover, since Myrrha slept apart, he did not know. The hall was strewn with wine and food, scatterings of the feast. Here were leaves and broken flowers, here cups thrown down empty, here soiled dishes; and here two dancing girls lay together, and here another lay with the young singer. But Hippias was not there. Walking softly, Kyrion went through the hall, out into the garden, the vineyard. Beneath the tree where Myrrha had rested, watching the gathering of the grapes, Hippias slept. Myrrha's kerchief was in his two hands, pressed to his face.

Kyrion sprang forward. His hands were crooked, as though to seize and strangle. But suddenly he stopped and leaned against a tree, utterly exhausted, so that he nearly wept. He could not kill the young man, he thought, for a kissed kerchief. Moreover he loved him. He looked on Hippias' face, sleeping and innocent, and felt that, in truth, it was sweet and familiar as the face of his own son. Hippias was his first prisoner, his first mark of conquest and of kindness; his body had received much love and care from Kyrion, his soul much teaching. And gifts bind the giver more than him who takes. "Until I know that Myrrha loves him," Kyrion said, "let him live;" and he turned and, still walking softly, went into the house.

But his anger grew and grew. Throughout that day, during their homeward journey and while he went about his business, he asked himself had Myrrha given Hippias the kerchief or had he stolen it? No man, he thought, loves hopelessly for long; therefore, even if the scarf had come into the young man's hands by theft or accident, she must, at some time, by some wantonness, have pricked on his desire. It was many months since Hippias had refused Clytè. Yet for that day Kyrion hid his rage; he did not know whether to speak or to remain silent. He feared to learn that Myrrha already belonged to Hippias and he feared, if by chance she had done nothing, knew nothing, to set the thought of the young man's passion in her mind and thereby awaken hers. He himself had often kissed a woman for no other reason than that she wanted it.

But by evening he could bear his doubts no longer, and striding in upon Myrrha, where she sat in her chamber, he accused her without more ado of loving Hippias, of causing him to love her. Myrrha's face,

lifted to his, showed amazement. "But I do not love him! I have not loved him!" she cried, and when he broke out with his story of the kissed scarf, answered more quietly that she had made no such gift to Hippias and had not discovered the theft. "I fancied I had lost it," she said. She smiled at Kyrion. Seeing his distress, she took his hands and begged him to give the matter no further thought. With time, a young man's love passed, she said, where no food was given it. It was on her lips, as it had been often before, to say that she had long known of Hippias' passion, had even made a plan to heal it, which was to put her little daughter before his eyes and later, when the girl was old enough, to marry them. But she remained silent, in fear of Kyrion. Her discretion did not serve her; he would not be comforted. Fiercely he swore that she must have provoked the youth that he should thus forget the gratitude, the love he owed his lord. And Myrrha, teased, grew teasing. "Am I so old, so ugly?" she said, to which Kyrion replied that Hippias was like a son to her and that desire between them was a monstrous thing. At this she nodded. "That is true," she said. "I feel I am his mother. I would I were. And that should give you ease, my Kyrion. The story-tellers recite tales of young men and how they are loved by mothers and step-mothers and the wives of princes. But in truth such stories have not to do with women but with the gods and the birth of gods and the beginnings of the world and the ancient, holy mysteries. Mothers do not act so. I have not provoked Hippias. I love only you."

She spoke so gently, her eyes were so innocent of hurt, that Kyrion might have believed her. But he would not. He wished to see her fierce as he was,

indignant at the insult offered her, suffering as he had suffered throughout that day, fearing her unfaithful. And fierce, indignant she could not be, it seemed. No doubt the young man's love pleased her, Kyrion thought, for all that she remained unwarmed. So his anger lingered, and for a long while they disputed, using many words to say what could not be said. Soon Myrrha, too, became angry. Kyrion declared that she had no shame, that although, maybe, she had not kissed, her words, her attitudes at the feast were profligacy. "I must be a pomegranate in my lord's bed," she mocked, "a crab-apple at every other hour. No tree can bear two fruits." Yet chastity, Kyrion said, was a holiness, even to her thinking; did she not fear to become evil? And Myrrha answered that chastity was but a means of storing power and had no virtue of itself. "Then," cried out Kyrion, "if Hippias had chanced to please you, you would have loved him?" Whereat Myrrha grew grave again and said no, she had sworn faithfulness; that oath was more terrible than love or wrath or death. "But if you had not sworn?" he asked once more. And still, when she replied that she could not picture her oath broken, that moreover she loved Kyrion and desired no other man, he was not satisfied. For what he wanted was a means whereby she would be bound, yet not by love, which could be a frail tie, he knew, nor yet by oaths, which were her concern and her god's but none of his. At last she wept. In a little while he was going on a journey, a matter of many months, and he had said that if, at that time, she went to Hippias, if Hippias came to her house, he would kill them both. "So he must know you fear him," she sobbed, "and that you do not trust my love. It were better to be dead."

In his heart Kyrion believed her. He could not have lain in bed, or worked, or fought, or smiled upon his friends if Myrrha had indeed been faithless. Like lice upon his skin the notion would have itched, leaving him no rest. Moreover, he thought that his good luck would have departed. His fortune was linked in some dark, holy fashion with Myrrha's love; losing the one, he lost the other. But although thus secretly he trusted her, he could not forget the pain of which she was the cause, or his bitterness against Hippias, whom he had loved and who was become his enemy. So, for the days that remained before his journey, he went moodily among his presses and his jars, his pigs and cattle, frowned as he rode to his friends' gatherings, in silence returned to Myrrha. Once, upon a farming matter, he spoke with Hippias. His eyes looked keenly into the young man's eyes, seeking a spark that would set his hatred blazing, or his love. But Hippias was sullen as before, his gaze empty, as though unseeing, and so their parting was without warmth of either kind, a sword without a hilt, a tale unfinished. With Myrrha, too, Kyrion was dull. And again she sighed often, she wept secretly, knowing that he whose body would soon be separated from her own, was already gone in spirit farther than he had ever been. One day she learned that, among the princes, he had openly condemned the women's festivals, calling them lechery and rottenness. At another time her maids told her that he had moved two of his closer friends, neighbouring princes, to cease, upon their lands, certain of the ancient holy practices. The change was small, yet the maids spoke of it in terror, stared at her with wide-open, horror-stricken eyes. Clytè, sitting at her loom, heard them

and groaned. As for Myrrha, she was so distracted that all thought of Hippias and jealousy went from her mind. She ran to Kyrion. In her turn she stormed and raved, crying out that he desired her death and the death of all her people, of the whole land, his own and his children's utter destruction. He answered coolly that life and worship changed and that the world would not die for a few women abandoning immodesty.

That night, as they rested side by side, they heard a moaning and a sound of feet. They knew that it was Clytè, who often, now, walked and muttered in her sleep. But to-night the girl's voice was louder than before, the noise of her steps came more constantly. They rose, and looking out into the courtyard, saw her moving back and forth in the light and shadow of the arches. She passed and vanished, passed again. The long white gown she wore, after the northern fashion, her arms, which she raised above her head, like wands, imploringly, gave her the look of a great moth, of a white owl fluttering in the moonlight. "Woe! Woe!" she cried, and turning, cried again as she went from them, "Woe! Woe!" Myrrha fell to shivering so violently that Kyrion sought to comfort her, to soothe her fears, mocking gently at Clytè's foolishness. He spoke and held her kindly, but Myrrha's trembling would not be stayed.

Soon after he left her. He went, not to plan war in Argolis, but on an expedition into Aetolia, to hunt boars and men.

CHAPTER V

That winter Myrrha was sad. Each day she communed with the goddess, pressed the black stone that was the holiest image to her lips and breast, filled her mind with thoughts and pictures of divinity. Yet her heart remained heavy; she took no pleasure in her children or her garden or in the decking of her body or the tiring of her hair. And her sorrow made her afraid. It did not come only, she fancied, from Kyrion's absence, from his lack of love. Kyrion lingered abroad. The wives of those who had gone to the hunting with him and who had returned, told her that he dwelt in Orchomenus with an Achæan concubine. This cleaving brought pain, but of itself it held no terror. Her fears sprang from the thought that Kyrion's prolonged coldness, the breaking of their love, was a dire portent. Behind it, as she believed, some peril, still unknown, threatened her and the whole world. For while, to Kyrion, good luck and happiness were linked with Myrrha's constancy, to Myrrha the whole of life was her life. She was the goddess, or the reflection of the goddess; her joy was the march of the holy seasons, or their echo. So if her life was wried, it was that a wryness had come into the world; if she suffered and could not rise above her sufferings, if she wept, ignorant yet of her sorrow's true cause, it was with the grief, the tears, of the weakened, unhappy Mother.

She offered blood and corn that strength might be restored to her divinity; she hung leeks and wild parsley about her home that evil might be expelled

therefrom. Sternly she fasted, seeking power. Lest concupiscence, by chance, should leap upon her unawares, she spoke to no man, refused, even as Kyrion had wished, to see Hippias. This denial inflamed the young man further. Already the chill that Kyrion had shown him, by suggesting anger, hence suspicion, fear, had given him much hope. Secretly one night he came into Myrrha's chamber. He found her sad, and at the sight of him, angry. She was less beautiful than he had ever seen her; he thought that she was not beautiful at all. Her hair was disarrayed, her gown unkempt. But desire had run too long in his blood; like a sickness it must out. So he cried his years of longing, his pains, his yearnings. Myrrha sat unmoved. To his hot words she answered, between weariness, as it seemed, and irritation: "No, no. I can never love you. I want only Kyrion." Purged at its height, the young man's fever, she hoped, would cool and leave him easier.

He left her and did not return; the grey days passed, heavy with cold and with foreboding. Yet rain fell, and Myrrha was a trifle reassured, thinking: "It is not the earth that grieves, nor the sky. There will be no starving." But one day, towards the end of winter, in the darkest time, when life burned low and dull, when the ghosts, both good and evil, the people said, pushed up from underneath the ground, Hippias came to her again, his face so strained with fear that, for the hour, it had forgotten love. There was sickness among his serfs, he said; he had come to beg Myrrha, chief mother and goddess of those lands, to go with him and do what should be done. And Myrrha thought: "Not famine, but pestilence." And as she ran to fetch her linen robe and box of simples, she

bade her slaves wash her son and daughter and set them each in a room apart and keep them close. Quickly she hastened with Hippias to the cottage where the sick lay. There were three of them, little children. They rested together in the straw, and beside them their mother crouched, moaning and swaying to and fro. Hens pecked in and out of the cabin; through a hole in its wall, pigs thrust themselves, snuffing. The children's skins were blotched and squamous; as they opened their mouths to catch the difficult air, their tongues showed scarlet. And Myrrha said: "It is too late. The wrath of the goddess is upon them." Yet she gave the mother herbs wherewith to dose the children, and bade her feed them with milk and much pure water that peradventure, by the blessing of the goddess, the devils that were in their blood might still be washed away. And to Hippias, after she had left the cottage, she gave many instructions, telling him to set a mark on every hut that held the fever, allowing no man to enter, and to wash all things in salted water and to burn holy sulphur, mighty enemy of evil spirits, that the devils should not be spread abroad. She herself, as she returned home, bathed in the river and, later burned her linen robe, before she went into the presence of the goddess.

But her heart was without hope. Next day another child fell ill, and the next day a woman. Myrrha, with Clytè and the maidens of the land, went forth to perform the spells and incantations that would appease, invigorate the goddess, that would stay the evil. At the head of the processions she walked through fields and villages. The girls carried boughs and torches; in a little chest—for no eye but her own might see it—Myrrha bore the black stone image of the Mother.

Alone in the night she and her priestess, Clytè, cut a black sheep in two and ran, holding the severed portions, about the cabins, about the towns that were still clean, tracing a magic circle that the fiends of pestilence, the people said, could not pass through. By every well, each running stream, she made the holy gestures, spoke the holy words that were to sanctify their waters. "I adjure you, Water," she said, "by the purity of the Mother, that you become pure, rid of all ghosts, a water of remedy and of salvation. By you shall all men and beasts and plants be made whole, all deaths expelled. . . ."

But she did these things sadly. In the days when the fever stole from hut to hut, gathering strength, she moved as though life had gone out of her, as though she were an image of wood or stone, stiffened already with the certainty of horror. In their homes the people would not obey her; though she and Hippias urged, they used no saving spells, gave themselves up wholly to Fate and the will of the goddess. They would not fumigate their huts or wash their vessels or their clothes in salt water, which also was very holy, or burn their corpses. Such burnings were an Achæan rite, yet Myrrha would have had them follow it, for fire was ever safe, she said, and this was no time for narrow bigotries. But the country folk murmured. Not to bury in the earth was sacrilege. Moreover it was evil to attack the sickness. "It is the anger of the gods," they said. "Who dare withstand it?" Soon the plague ran free over the land, a scarlet death, devourer of men and babes. Soon Myrrha's son Kritho fell ill. He had escaped from the chamber where she had confined him and had gone with other boys to the river, to fish in the spring-swollen waters. Now he retched and

shivered. And at once Myrrha sent a slave to Hippias with the message that he was to make ready for a journey. Her son was lost, maybe, but her daughter, mirror of herself, still laughed and chattered, still raised an unblemished face to the kisses her mother could not give her, for fear of the foul spirits that she harboured in her gown, her hands, her lips, which had touched sickness. So Myrrha stood before her house, and a nurse brought the girl forth, with her dresses and her jewels and her toys and images in a coffer, and when Hippias was come, riding as fast as he was able, handed her up into his arms. Clytè's son also was carried from the house and put into a servant's charge. He and his mother wept. But Myrrha's daughter grasped the horse's mane with her hands and gripped its neck with her knees and smiled proudly, for she loved Hippias.

When all was settled, Hippias bade farewell to Myrrha. "Take them to Orchomenus," she said, "to Kyrion, and do not return until I send you word." She took a necklet from her throat, a ring from her finger, and gave them to him, looking into his eyes wherein love sat again, with pity. "These will be a sign," she said, "to Kyrion. So he will know that I have given my child to you, to keep and guard forever. She is my heart, my lands, my wealth, my life. When the day comes and you love her, remember that you are loving me." And Hippias put the gifts in his bosom, and Myrrha kissed him, her tears running on his cheeks and mouth, and he rode off. And Myrrha returned to the house to watch her firstborn die.

Long days and nights it took him, while Myrrha administered the holy draughts and washed his body and performed, before him and before the household

shrine and the tree-god in the garden, the many other rites that were proper, but that could not cure him, she thought. For her wisdom told her that there was but one efficacious way, one movement of the heart, one ceremony. If she could yield up to the goddesses another treasure, if her love could give them Kyrion, offer his life in place of his son's, then Kritho would be restored to her. Throughout the nights she knelt, dreaming of that dark project, of the dark gesture that would give it power. All about her the slaves, the serfs, the people of the neighbouring towns, were whispering that Kyrion was to blame, that he, by his blasphemies, had angered the goddesses and brought the plague to Attica. It seemed she heard their murmuring, threatening voices. Within the house Clytè wandered, entranced and weeping. She had chosen to remain with Myrrha, not to fly to safety with her son. But grief and fear increased her ravings. "Woe! Woe upon Kyrion!" she moaned in the darkness. Her days were become strained and bitter. Once, being in her right mind, unmoved by the spirit that possessed her in the night-time and that was a spirit of a god, the people said, she came into the sick-room. "Can you not save him, Myrrha?" she asked, and when Myrrha told her of the one rite that she would not do: "Let Kyrion die!" she cried furiously. "It is his doing!" Myrrha hid her face. "Oh Kritho, Kritho," she wept. "My son, my son. . . ." Yet she would not kill Kyrion.

After the boy had died and his body had been consumed upon the pyre, a strange quiet came upon Myrrha. At his burning she had howled with the other women; a score of times she had flung herself forward, risking death, to touch his hands again, to kiss his feet.

Broken by sorrow and the lack of sleep, she had fallen, at last, and lain as though entranced. But in that darkness it seemed that a new life touched her; a new thought stirred in her mind, a new resolution lightened her heart. She rose serene, no longer stiffened by horror or crushed by grief but moving with a supple, almost a happy ease. Once again, clothed in fair linen, her hair veiled, she headed the processions; her eyes were so gentle, so calm, that men wept to see her and women smiled, gaining courage from her courage. "Truly, she is the Mother," they said. At other times she went into the huts, burning, with her own hands, the purifying herbs and substances, caring for the sick. Behind her slaves carried jars of milk that she gave to the most needy. And certain of the people, through her help maybe, shed the scaly sickness safely, were freed from the red anger of the goddess, as they said. But more often they died; and every day men spoke more fiercely against Kyrion. They kissed Myrrha's garments, touched her hands for luck. Her daughter was alive; the stain of death was not upon her. But when the name of Kyrion was heard, women looked downwards, the men turned away. More openly, now, they muttered that it was Kyrion and his oak-god who, by doing their goddesses mischief, had caused the evil. Many lesser followers of the Achæan Father died mysteriously about that time. Those who did not die found that their corn vanished, that their swine met with singular accidents. And when they sought to buy new grain, new pigs, no man would sell to them. Ever rising, the murmur went through the land of how even the finest mansion might be burned and vineyards and orchards also, of how one death, one greatest sacrifice, might comfort and revive the Mother.

And Myrrha, mingling with her people, knew these things and thought, "The day is nearly here." Spring came. The holy Daughter of Attica, Persephone, wakened from her husband's arms, from death, underneath the earth and everywhere her feet spread flowers. Upon the stony hills the little herbs called to the bees; their blue flowers made the whole land blue. Beneath the pine-trees were violets, and in the meadows, by the river's yellow waters, the iris and the hyacinth grew, mirrors of the sky, and the narcissus, thick and white as the forgotten snows, and the golden crocus and the daffodil, sweet-smelling sunshine. Persephone danced, and the maidens and the boys danced with her. Then, swift as she had come, she passed, and her mother Deo, the gummy figs, the heavy corn, lived in her place. And on a day, some little while before the earliest harvest, Myrrha said farewell to Clytè and her slaves and went forth from her house. She carried with her bread and fresh water and, in a casket, a fine patterned gown, the same that she had worn upon her wedding night, and the jewels that had covered her on that occasion, gifts from Kyrion. For a long while she walked, neither resting nor taking food, until she reached a certain hill, not far from the hill of Athens, where woods sloped gently to the sea. Here was solitude and the mossy smells of earth, and shadows and sunshine, spread like golden water here and there, or falling, as fountain drops fall, through the dark leaves. And here, for Myrrha, was holiness. Each tree was a nymph, a goddess; the leaves' whispering and the whispering of the waves below were divine voices; the scent and quiet was the peace of the Mother. By the edge of the wood she took off the robe she wore and buried it and put on her fine patterned gown and her

jewels, and clothed thus in gold and colours, walked slowly beneath the holy shade, towards the blue sea that shone between the branches, bland as a promise. And as she went, pictures came to her of another wood, another sea, and of the happiness that had been hers, many years before, in distant Argolis, with Kyrion. Freely she let these thoughts run through her. Tears tightened her throat, poured from her eyes. "Alas! Alas!" her spirit cried, and it seemed to her that the wood cried back at her, "Alas!" She did not seek to stem her tears or stay the memories that caused them, images of happiness and of sorrow, of her loss, of Kyrion lying far from her with other loves, forgetful. They shook her body like rough waves, they were like claws of birds within her breast. But they were holy. Such suffering, her wisdom told her, was a great spell; only by passing through this underworld of pain would she come presently to joy, purified and altogether free.

By the water she paused and looked down. On its smoothness the currents scored strange lines, circles and scrolls and twisting patterns, symbols of the Mother, Myrrha thought, and of her own fate. And because to her the sea was love and Kyrion and the Goddess, her grief rose to ecstasy, and she flung off her gown again and with her nails tore at her naked body and her cheeks and hair. Kneeling, she swayed and writhed upon the ground, struck her head upon it, as though indeed she mourned the cruellest death. At last, smeared with blood and tears, she plunged herself in the water and bathed, possessing and possessed, and then returned and put on her coloured gown and laid herself beneath a tree, still weeping and crying out for love and Kyrion. And as she lay, the spell, whose power goes by contraries, touched her and the wonder she

had looked for came into her soul. The night was falling; colour and light were almost gone. And in the dimness Kyrion lay beside her. Her eyes were closed, she did not see him; but her love could not mistake the comfort of his arms about her and the sound of his voice and the touch of his lips and the warmth that went through her, wrapped her round. She would have opened her eyes and looked into his face, but his hands pressed her, forbidding her to see the truth, to tempt the goddesses. So she lay and knew her husband's love and slept.

CHAPTER VI

In the morning, having eaten and drunk, Myrrha went to Athens, to the hall where the princes and the king were assembled that day. Her chin a little raised, gazing steadfastly before her, she walked through the fields and streets, stained and scarred and with her dark hair tangled, splendid in her splendid gown. Indeed, from that moment onward she looked and spoke no longer like a woman. The goddess was on her, she thought; her mind was wise with a new wisdom, her body strong with a new passion. And although her golden jewels shone in the sunlight, no man harmed her. Her eyes had a brightness that awed the people. "Behold the Mother," they said again and fell upon their faces. It seemed that they had seen lights about her head and that her clasped hands concealed some dread object, a little snake perhaps, that was the plague itself, or the eye of a monster that would turn those who looked on it to stone.

The princes, too, were awed. As Myrrha came into the hall they put aside the cups with which, from time to time, they cooled or warmed again their discussions and disputings, and bowed low, recognising the goddess. They listened humbly while she said the simple, necessary things that she had come to say. For in the trance that had possessed her, after her son's death, the true means whereby the plague might be cast out of Attica had been revealed to Myrrha, and now, standing in strange majesty before the princes, she told her revelation. The pestilence was on them, she said, because the ancient rite was maimed. The blood

of men had been denied it, it had sickened; pigs and goats and dogs had died, the gods were weary. If Athens would see life grow again and foulness perish the king must take two souls, a woman and a man—gods who would give their powers to the world, victims who would cleanse it—and at the coming harvest feast, in the hour of purification, kill them and cast their ashes into the sea.

“I am the Goddess,” Myrrha said. “I will die.” And the princes nodded, accepting her wisdom. With the fear of death the fear of error had come upon them, and they also had asked of their hearts if some mistake, some omission, had not weakened the earth, exhausted the goddesses. Moreover they knew that the people murmured, complaining that the ancient ceremonies were lost. No maiden daughter, now, in Attica, was hung upon a tree, no Son-king was slain, up in the mountains. No longer at the marriage of the figs was holiness poured out in death to vivify the land; no longer at the summer tasting of the fruits were men sent from the cities, charged with the world’s evil, as Myrrha said, and killed that other men might live clean. The islands, Minos in his Cretan palace, remembered these things, but Athens had forgotten. So the princes nodded, bowing before a holiness that would restore to them peace and safety.

It did not come into their minds to question Myrrha. She was the Goddess. Now, lifting her voice, she described the rites that would bring health again, with purification, ordered the manner of her death and of that of the young man who must die with her. He could be a slave, she said, or a prisoner; there was no need to lose a life that had value in the Attic land, a free citizen. And again the princes nodded, admiring

the prudence that bade them deal death yet deal it carefully. That one youth, one woman, might be both god and victim did not astonish them. To them it was a plain matter that the same spirit should be holy and life-giving and laden with foulness. Such conceptions were familiar, for holiness was still a confused thing, a mingling of dread and desire. The princes were well content that Myrrha, who was priestess, mother of her people, should also be, since her divinity willed it, their scapegoat, their offscouring.

So it was ordained. And at once the princes and the king sent heralds to the cities to proclaim the sacrifice and to bid the people fast and purify themselves more than was usual, in preparation for this greater cleansing. And Myrrha, before she went into the holy chamber where, with her partner, she was to receive and to confer holiness and to await death, called one of the younger princes to her. He was a friend and lover of Kyrion's. Very solemnly, by the strongest spells of blood and dedication, she bound him to protect Kyrion, to keep him, if he returned unexpectedly to Attica, from witnessing the festival and from visiting his house till all was over. "My people plot to kill him," she said, "for Deo's sake. And if he comes upon the feast his foolishness might provoke them in that place also. One death is enough. He must not die." The young man swore that he would take Kyrion and bind him with chains rather than let him risk danger. And Myrrha gave him rings and tokens and many other messages of a more intimate nature, which he, loving Kyrion, understood well and promised to deliver truly. Then she kissed him, even as she would have kissed her beloved, and they parted, and she went into the sanctuary.

The preparations for the feast took many days. Almost at every hour, within the holy place and throughout the land, new spells were performed by the magicians and the maidens. Some had to do with the harvest, the gathering of the first sacred fruits, and some had to do with Myrrha and her companion. Myrrha was already very holy; the rites were to refresh, to enhance her holiness. But upon the youth, the second victim, godliness was laid as though it were a mantle; by water and by fire, by especial food, by the touch of blood and images and sacred substances the godhead was conferred on him. He had been chosen, as Myrrha had decreed, from among the city's prisoners, a young sailor, taken in a recent raid; and in face he was neither beautiful nor ugly but only healthy looking. His body was bright as that of a well-rubbed horse, and his hair gleamed like a crow's breast. He had been thin, from lying in the pits under the fortress, but soon his bones showed no more than strength required and his skin was red with the rich blood that flowed beneath it. Wine and oil and women were given to him, and he enjoyed them, forgetting death. For though he had wept and screamed when he was first carried to the sanctuary, intoxication and the homage paid to him, soft beds and music and kingly food, fine garments and the thought of his divinity had raised him up, so that in a little while he had grown proud as Myrrha.

But Myrrha drank no wine and ate but as much as ceremony commanded. During those days her flesh wasted, and each morning her eyes shone brighter from the strange fevers that burned her and the strange dreams that visited her sleep. Each night, not Kyrion but her daughter appeared before her. The

girl stood in the quiet of the sanctuary, smiling and lovely, heir to Myrrha's life and wealth and holiness. Myrrha made many spells to keep her there and to bestow upon her, even now, the virtues that were her inheritance. She was too young to know them; at the dark hour when Myrrha gave her power up in death, she would not be there. But later, she in her turn would be high priestess and mother of the land. Throughout the night, her heart exalted, Myrrha whispered words and wove spells with her hands to give her child greatness. Often in the daytime with the other priestesses she fed the doves that lived in the sanctuary. One of them came and sat upon her shoulder. It was her daughter, she said.

And on the morning of the sacrifice it seemed that the girl did not fade with the growing dawn, as had been her habit. She lingered beside Myrrha, although invisibly. As the victims went forth to the sound of drums and cymbals her hand was on her mother's hand, leading her, so Myrrha thought; her soul, in the guise of a dove, fluttered with the other doves over her head. The procession walked slowly through the crowded streets, round the walls, encircling the city that good should enter in and evil be swept away. It was the finest that Athens had seen for many a year. The victims' cheeks were painted red; on their heads were crowns of verbenæ, priestly wreaths. It was the king's place that they were taking; they were gods. Boughs were in their hands and garlands of figs about their necks. With them marched many young children carrying branches laden with the signs of summer and harvest and generation, new wool and cakes and fruits and phalluses and vessels of oil and wine. Wild herbs and acorns were there also and other of the most

ancient gifts of Deo, and vases full of water and of milk and offerings of honey. Chief of all was a great pot flowing with barley and every manner of seed, which a priest bore very reverently. Yet with these happy things were dark things, the funeral dancing of girls and the noise of the Mother's cymbals and the flames and smoke of her torches. And as the procession passed before them, the people groaned, and sometimes, although the time of stoning was not come, stones flew and struck Myrrha or her companion. She paid no heed to them. As for the youth, he was blind and insensible with wine. Now he swaggered like a prince and now he stumbled like a sick beggar.

And still, as the procession made its way about the hill of Athens and then out towards the sea, it seemed to Myrrha that her daughter went with her. The heat of the sun and the weariness of much walking were on her. She was thirsty; her ears were dulled by the noise of drumming, irregular yet regular like the beat of a disordered pulse, or of waves, some great, some small, falling on the shore. But her vision of the girl's face was water and cool air, sweet quiet for her ears, balm for her blood-stained feet. The way was stony, and Myrrha and the youth walked barefoot, carrying their branches. And as Myrrha passed by the barley-fields she began to speak with her daughter. "Take care that you do not leave me," she said. "If you are by me when I die you will become pure as I am pure. You will be rich and full of power. All this I will give you." And the girl seemed to answer: "You are my mother. You have saved Attica and Kyrion. All is well." And Myrrha said again: "You were a very little child and very active when I carried you. Soon you will be big as the whole world." The people,

although they could not hear her because of the din, saw that her lips moved and that her face had a rapt look and said: "She is talking to the earth or to the children of the earth, to the Daughter or to the Son. The plague will surely leave us."

So they came to the appointed place, which was a high rock above the sea. And Myrrha looked at the vast mass of the people, stretching far over the plain, enclosing her in this dry, stony place, between the sky that was like a brazen shield and the empty sea, in the heavy summer air. The king and the priestesses and the magicians were between her and the people. They made ready for the ceremonies. Some built the pyre, others laid out the rods, others set the cups and vessels in right order. Beside her the youth swayed. The fear of death had pierced through his drunkenness, and he stared with wild eyes at the crowd and at the priests and then at Myrrha. And for a moment it was as though a blackness rushed up from her bowels and drowned her heart, put the blindness of death before her eyes. She opened her mouth to scream. But before her parched lips uttered their cry a priestess came to her, and speaking certain words, gave her the holy draught with a cake of barley and a piece of cheese and figs. And she ate and drank, making the ritual gestures, and after that her anguish left her. The swooning was the plague, which she was taking on herself; her terror was the evil of the land that had been put upon her head. She stood silent, and the people stood silent likewise. The drums and cymbals were still, everything was hushed. And now the priestesses took leeks and squills and twigs of the wild fig-tree and beat her and the youth upon the secret parts, that the power of the plants should go

into them at this supreme hour; and while they did this a flute-player struck up a little air, clear and shrill.

It was this little air, rising like a bird's song in the quiet, in the sun's heat, that Kyrion heard as he rode from Athens. He knew it well, for Myrrha had herself learned to play it as a child, and he had often thought how strange it sounded, after the cymbals' crash and the brassy noise of trumpets. And knowing its meaning, he knew that he was too late. For many long days he had lain easily in Orchomenus, bound by love of his new woman and by the thought of Myrrha ageing and growing ever more fanatical with the years. He had forgotten her and Attica, now that his son was dead and that Hippias was to have his daughter and his lands. But the news, brought by a chance traveller, that Myrrha was about to die, had stirred him suddenly, and he had ridden off, though whether it was love for her that lashed him most, or hatred of the gods who killed her, he could not have said.

Yet he came so late that the young prince, his friend, had ceased to watch. And so it happened that Kyrion rode over the yellow ground that was marked here and there with grassy patches, dark on light, like a leopard's skin, and saw the great crowd and beyond it the priestesses in their fine garments and the priests and the musicians and the king and princes, and above them, on the rock, Myrrha half-naked beside the half-naked youth. The people were motionless, watching the rites that would give them relief from sickness, with an abundance of fruits next year and a happy harvest feast now. No one heeded Kyrion, although he made his way through the crowd with blows and kicks, shouting his rage and hatred. For the flute's small music had ceased; the cymbals crashed, the

drums rolled. Myrrha raised her head, and once again her eyes shone so brightly, staring at some point high in heaven, that those that were nearby greatly rejoiced and said: "The goddess is full of life and power. She will give us much wealth." Then she threw out her arms and uttered a loud cry, and the first stone struck her, flung by the king himself, a well-aimed blow, and she dropped. And while the stones, which were the earth's impurities and sufferings, flew thick from the priests' hands, the people yelled and poured out curses. Soon the fire would consume their last foulness; with the youth's and Myrrha's ashes, they would be washed in the purifying sea. Meanwhile they rid themselves in belching words of their hatred of the plague, of hunger, thirst and every wretchedness, cried out their hope of a rich feast and their lust for killing. But Kyrion wept. "Myrrha!" he called, and fought to reach the princes and the rock. Four young men were needed to hold and bind him, lest he should kill the king, or hurt himself.

BOOK III

In the years after the Achæans came to Greece there was much fighting both in heaven and on earth. The poets who tell us of the heavenly battle would have us see it happen at the beginning of time. But that is their poets' way and need not cause confusion. They were the singers of the conquering people, and to make their gods supreme they must needs set them in an empty world. For though Myrrha and many others died, it was not their faith that their blood nourished but the faith of such as Kyrion, the bold, crafty, positive invaders. In a very little while the oak-king, the Sky-god Zeus overcame his enemies and sat on the highest throne, in the grand mansion he had built himself upon the heavenly mountain. And the poets, mingling, perhaps, history with ritual, sang of his courage and his cunning, and of the great fight that he fought, and how he was in sore danger from the monstrous sons of Earth, his enemies, and how the lesser gods fled in terror and how he won the victory at last. Such tales were told in Babylon and in many other lands; in the ceremonies the king, the god, ever vanquished his foes, which were bad weather and pestilence and the evil doings of other men. After they had sung of his greatness, the poets sang of the royal birth of Zeus, his godly descent. In this way they established his right to the throne of heaven, even as the invaders established their rights to earthly thrones.

They said that he was the son of the first gods, grandson of the primordial elements, and since all men like to see the humble raised up, they said he was the younger son. And it is true that he came last of the high gods. His father, Kronos, would have devoured

him, for it was the habit of the ancient men and their spirits to devour children. But his mother fled with him to Crete and set him, a swaddled infant, in a cave, where ever after, the poets said, blood poured and fire flashed out to mark the birth of Zeus. Crete was the home of baby-gods and of devoured children, and caves had been their birthplaces from all time. He was suckled by a she-goat, an ever-holy beast, guarded by warriors, nursed by nymphs. Each baby-god, whether of Greece, or Phrygia, or Crete, had his guardians and attendants, the holy dancers, Sophia and Hyacinthos, Manthos or Myrrha, who had been men, who had been gods, who now, being of the fallen people, were lovely or hideous monsters, nymphs or ogres. By craft he overcame his father and by might the world. And having conquered, he married his sister Hera. There was no other in an empty world whom he could wed. Moreover, the custom was an ancient, holy custom, and current still in Egypt. The poets and the priests of that time knew of Egypt and of Babylon and esteemed the wisdom of these lands highly.

But in truth it was the first goddess that Zeus married, the Mother of the world, whom Sophia and Myrrha had loved. Like the Achæan chiefs who took to wife the daughters of the princes they had conquered, thus giving to their children a legal, royal birthright, the oak-king wed Hera, queen of the older world under another name. Their marriage was performed beside the stream, within the Cretan grove, where holy marriages were usual. He led her to Olympus, and with her took her marriage portion, which was the worship of the men of Greece. Other father-gods had done the same. In Asia a Hittite

Thunder-king had wed the Mother. But there the two had reigned together, sharing their people's love. In Greece the ancient goddess was undone. Her wisdom lingered in the seasonable rites, the ceremonies that gave the land fruit and corn, and in many other obscure, unacknowledged ways, disguised as part of the new worship, hidden within it, a maggot in its fruit, or its essential kernel. But true love and veneration for her were known only in the darkened places where the ancient people fled for refuge, in music-loving Thrace, in the beast-haunted hills of Arcadia.

On earth the battles went much after the same manner as the heavenly fight. Down from the north the Achæans and their people came and in course of time built a fine empire, overcoming the islands, bringing about, at last, the downfall of King Minos. They went to Troy also, to retrieve a woman and her wealth which had been stolen. At that time the land was still the portion of the bride, and the Greeks had sworn that no Trojan cousin, by seizing a wife, should own an Achæan kingdom. It is said that they sought even to subdue Egypt, and that Rameses was hard put to it to keep them off. They made a commotion everywhere, and people were flung hither and thither from their homes, even as the gods themselves, according to the stories, were scattered helter skelter.

But especially they made a commotion in the minds of men. They were a reason-loving race, slower and cooler in thought and desire than the swift, hot Mediterranean people. They knew little of the passions of the heart, and of the passions of the flesh their chief was fighting. Their loves were pastime, or the sober bond that keeps houses and families together.

Strong desire was an unusual thing. Achilles did no more than sulk for Briseis—and that because her loss showed that Agamemnon was a bigger man than he—and Ulysses soon preferred Penelope to Calypso. Of wineless intoxications, excessive wonders, they knew nothing at all, whether these enchantments be of the soul, as some say, or of the body. Their fancies and their senses were too mild to make of a colour or a curve, of a fine tree or a dolphin swimming, a permanent delight, or to shape, from the dark movements of the blood, a mystery. Far from them the sense that they could become one with the world or God. Indeed they hated and despised such raptures. They were men; there was indecency and foolishness in seeking to be part of god, or god incarnate. And the rulers whom they set above them in Olympus were like themselves, though bigger and longer lived. Zeus was a good fighter, a just ruler, adulterous yet moderate and home-keeping through his adulteries. And even as they formed their gods in their own image (as Xenophanes says), they ordered all things in the measure of man. A humanity that had been one, each creature a drop in a universal sea, became a humanity of separate men, every man answerable to himself, distinct as the stars in heaven.

They were reasonable. Reason was their silver spoon, and with it they stirred the elements of the world's thought, making, in time, after they had joined with the older people and received from them sufficient warmth and fancy, a porridge so excellent that it has never ceased to nourish. To find the truth by way of a well-balanced mind became their aim. And in fact, as I have said, the children of Zeus and Hera discovered, with the passing of the years, much

truth, besides many useful matters by the roadside. In a life where too much wine will cause the eyes to see what is not there, where taste, smell, hearing, touch can all, in certain circumstances, lie, the mind that compares feeling with feeling, event with event, illusion with illusion, may well be, for all its weakness, the best guide.

But this search for truth did not begin at once. Philosophising is an adolescent concern. At their first coming, the Achæans sought only for food, beds and a continuance of life, with toys and fighting. For they should not be compared to little children but to young boys who love hard play and ingenious devices and each other and a good tale, now and then. Like many young boys they despised women.

Between this new contempt and the new reasonableness that cast out all dark mysterious things, ecstasies, passions, women lost their state. In the houses of the new gods—amiable, meat-eating shadows, for the most part, of those who had loved honey and slaughter—they still found honour. Their singular gifts, whereby they fell into trances, beheld strange visions, uttered strange words more readily than men, made them the oracles of their new masters, even of the sooth-saying, healing god Apollo, now held to be the eldest son of Zeus. Their knowledge of the ancient lore kept them as priestesses. But in public matters they had no place. They voted, it seems, that Athena should rule Athens—a maiden of the people's Daughters, who was, the kings said, the same as their warrior queen goddess—in place of the Son of Fruitfulness and Water, Poseidon. And after that they voted no more. In Greece, as well as in the countries where the southern nomads, the children

of Abraham, dwelt, they were wholly overruled. Save for those, priced above rubies, whose industry was ever likened to the industry of bees, working and hoarding in their homes, they were now said to be a foolish, impudent, dangerous people. On Olympus, the poet Hesiod tells us, at the beginning of time, to avenge himself for a slight that man had offered him, Zeus created Pandora, first of "the deadly race" of women. He formed her beautiful but evil, full of lies and cunning and deceit, a bane for mortal men. These are the words of Hesiod. It would appear that he knew of the Jewish tale that makes our mother Eve source of all wickedness. In Canaan also, the stricter priests and prophets of the father Jehovah, god of the wandering Hebrews, had much to say against the ancient Canaanitish goddesses. Hesiod further tells us that after Pandora had been fashioned, "the sheer delusion, unescapable," and sent on earth to punish mankind, Olympus shook with the laughter of Zeus and of his immortals.

While things were in this way between men and women, another flood of northerners swept over Greece, the sons of Hercules, the Dorians. On this occasion, we are told, the invaders were indeed barbarian. Somewhere between heaven and earth Hercules had stalked, ridding the land of robbers and disease, diverting rivers for the benefit of men, spreading the greatness of his people's name over the world. His sons restored the evils he had healed. For the time all wisdom was forgotten, new and old. Mycenae and Tiryns, many towns were burnt; wealth, art, thought were broken and destroyed. Wild soldiers, armed with the new iron they had brought from the north, roamed the valleys and the hills, doing such

things as hungry, savage men do at every time in every place where there is disorder. Zeus and his family of gods alone survived, like Noah on the top of Ararat. The newcomers worshipped him also. And as they in their turn came to rest, built homes and settled, the folk they had dislodged, together with those of their own men who were not tired of wandering, carried the Olympian worship out of Greece to the hundred cities they founded about the Mediterranean Sea.

Here as in Greece Zeus was worshipped as the Father. Apart from the seasons rites, which were performed to compel the earth to flourish and were no concern of the Oak-god, each northerner remained priest and ruler in his own household. In the same way Zeus was chief father in the city states that were formed after the land had recovered from invasion, exodus, fighting and piracy, after law and trade had revived and a measure of comfort was again established. He had become a tolerant, hospitable, law-abiding king, kind to the stranger, cruel chiefly to oath-breakers. Perjury was his people's besetting sin. Men had not yet seen his adulteries and fits of rage as foolish, as they did later; and although the wiser of them were fast coming to the conception of a god greater than he, a supreme divinity "like unto mortals neither in body nor in thought," as the poet Xenophanes also says, the mass of them still held to their picture of a man-like god and were well content with it. Zeus offered them no future life. The distant sunset islands where Rhadamanthus, brother of Minos, was said to rule his Cretan sailors, were unknown in Greece. Men had no place on Olympus. Death meant but a prospect of dark shadows, a dim flitting of unhappy ghosts. But again the people asked no more

at that time than that life should be tolerably easy and well fed, with plenty of festivals where they could dance and laugh, and plenty of games where they could sport or admire others sporting.

Beside Zeus, all the while, half-concealed, the image of the Mother hovered ; and dimly, under her many disguises, men worshipped her. Scraps of her wisdom were honoured here and there, for the Dorians, like the Achæans before them, feared the older people. They were respectful of the ancient cunning and cleverness, so that the artists of Athens and the islands, the metal-workers of the Trojan Ida, the priests of the Mount Ida of Crete, seemed to them magicians; the women, with their herbs and mutterings, were witches. Thus fearing, they helped to keep alive what strong minds call superstition. In Attica and in many parts of Greece, the chief Mother was Demeter, the ancient Deo, giver of the corn; although at first, in Athens, the Maid, ruler of the city, had something motherly also. She ruled where the oldest goddess Earth had ruled, and although she was a maid and had become confused with the warrior goddess whom the Achæan kings loved, bearer of shield and lance and helmet, now said to be a virgin and a child of Zeus, the people could not forget that the Earth had lain with Hephæstus, the mountain god of fire, and had borne the snake Erechtheus. Poseidon, too, spirit of fruitfulness and water, was said to be a child of Earth. He was confused with Erechtheus as chief Son of Athens and of the Maid Athena.

But where corn grew the Mother was clearest. Nothing could rid men's minds of the notion that the earth was female and that, when it came to delivering her of her fruit-children, women were the best midwives.

And death, the dust to which human dust returned, was ever a woman. Food and birth and death, all were of the underworld. So, at Eleusis and certain other cities, Demeter had her Mysteries, rites that remembered the oldest ceremonies of the corn and generation. But these were secret matters, shown only to the initiated. In other countries the Mother was loved frankly—in Egypt, in Babylon, where the Jews called her the Whore because her daughters offered to strangers, in the temple of the goddess, the virginities that their husbands thought too holy and too dangerous to take—in Lydia and Phrygia and Sicily, to which land many of the children of Minos had fled in earlier times—indeed in every place whither the Greeks went and whence visitors came. When the wisest of the children of Zeus and Hera, the Ionians, said to be an Athenian people, the old Mediterranean race mingled with the first Achæans, the sons, as it were, of Kyrion and Myrrha, built their new cities on the Phrygian coast, they took Zeus with them. But they, too, had kept a memory of the Mother, and everything they found in their new, soft, luxurious homes, refreshed it. So it happened that when the Ionians of Phocæa sent out another colony to Massilia in Gaul, the image that the adventuring sailors carried was of a woman. Her name was Artemis, the same as that of the virgin huntress, daughter of Zeus. But in reality she was the fecund Mother herself. Her mighty breasts could have fed all the world with milk and corn and blood and honey. A priestess served her.

And as ever, beside the Mother a young man stood, her son or lover. In fact, no doubt because time and Zeus had revealed the superiority of man, he was the greater of the two. In every land he had a different

name, Osiris in Egypt, Tammuz in Babylon, Adonis in Phoenicia, Attis in Phrygia and in Lydia, Sabazios or Dionysos in Thrace. But in his soul he was the same, the murdered son by whose death men flourished. Many different gifts were his, corn and fruit and wine, sunshine and water, for, long before that, as I have said, the holy beings and their powers and ceremonies had begun to mingle the one with the other, youths with infants, maids with mothers, fathers with sons, spring-gods with corn-givers, trees with water, fire with sun, so that each great deity was a summing-up of many.

And presently this son appeared also in Greece. He rose up as god of wine, bestower of the ecstasies of drunkenness. He became known as Dionysos, which was his Thracian name, and it is true that he came in a manner from abroad and that the form in which he now showed himself was foreign, so that the Greeks must needs have called him a new god and a stranger. In reality he was both new and old, Greek born and foreign born, a visitor from without and a reawakening of ancient things within. Scattered here and there were many remnants of his ancient madness, dark rites whose meaning was half-lost, stories of slaughtered youths that had been half-turned from their original intention. And there were many Fruitful Sons up and down the land who were in truth so like the new Dionysos that the people were able to welcome him and brother him on their own gods easily enough, and later to accept the tales their rulers, the priests of the Olympians, made up to keep their sacred stories in good order, tales that told how Dionysos was the youngest son of Zeus, born of yet another, last adultery.

The rustic Dionysos, the god who pranced at the

vintage and revelled at the opening of the wine-casks, whose image was a tree with a head and arms sprouting with its branches from the top of it, before whom men killed a goat and danced and offered phalluses, was a god of wine. Through him the new Dionysos, also the grape-giver, first gained his power; through him, perhaps, he kept it. The people had forgotten that in the days before the Achæans brought them the oak-king, in the days when gods had no true faces and no names, but only powers, they, too, had known a young male holiness whose death-feasts gave great joy. They had forgotten that this god and his yet holier mother conferred a wineless ecstasy, and that he was nevertheless the god of wine, since he was god of every fruitfulness, and that he was a tree, even as Attis and Osiris were trees, and a pillar that stood in the midst of the orchards, and a goat that they killed, and a kid whom the women devoured in the mountains when the winter sun was torn out of the belly of the earth, and a phallus and many other things. They could not recognise, in their rustic god of grapes, their ancient divine lord, grown peasant; or guess that the god who appeared among them now in alien dress was that same prince, raised again to honour.

So, to the people who had forgotten, he was a stranger, and to the northmen who had no gods of rapture, he was, in truth, altogether new. Only the wise men understood his greatness. For their Dionysos was not the god of vines and drunkenness, but Dionysos the giver of mystic ecstasy. He was a handsome youth; he was the firstborn of his mother; and he was the kid that Myrrha had rent and eaten, the babe that Sophia and her dancers had devoured, the flame that flashed forth from the Mother Mountain.

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Above all he was the god who tore men's souls out of their breasts and joined them with the universe. He was the god whose heart the Cretan men took and put into a chest or hid within an image, as of old they had put it into the tree or into their own bodies, whose flesh they ate that they might become like, that they might become one with him.

CHAPTER I

In the hills of southern Thrace, beside the river Strymon, there lived a boy named Eolon. At that time Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. Apries reigned in Egypt, and Alyattes, father of Cræsus, in Lydia. The father of the boy was a priest of Dionysos, and his mother was a priestess in the fine sanctuary that stood near the hill-top, among the pines. The boy was born in the year of the eclipse that Thales had predicted. And because she had been delivered of him after the dimness had passed his mother had said that he would be a bringer of light to all the world. As the sun excelled the stars he would excel all other men in beauty and wisdom. He was truly of the dawn, she said, and so had called him Eolon.

The boy's father was of the ancient Thracian people, akin to those who had been in Crete and Lydia and Phrygia, and who were distinguished from the newer Thracians by the colour of their hair and eyes, which was dark brown. The later comers were red as the foxes that stole in and out of the vines, eating the fruit. As for the Thracian kings, it seems that they were of yet another northern race. They had but one god, from whom they said they were descended, whereas the tribes they ruled had three, a male spirit whom they worshipped as Dionysos, Son of the Divine, and a female whom the Greeks declared to be the same as their Queen Artemis, a Great Mother goddess of the moon and of the earth and death; and lastly another male, Ares, god of war, for they were great fighters.

Their rites were those that Myrrha had practised. To them, as to her, the Son was beast and mystery, a victim whom they killed and devoured in nightly, torch-light ravings, to the noise of pipes and drums and other deep-sounding instruments that imitated thunder. He was a snake, a flame upon the mountain-top, a babe born in secret places. But especially he was a bull, for they were breeders of fine cattle and the bull appeared to them chief among the powers that gave life. Its blood was strength and its horns were the horns of plenty.

Certain of them were by nature sad. There was a tribe that said all life was evil, so that when a child was born they wept, and when a man died they rejoiced and poured earth and flowers on him, laughing. Among the tribes of the far north were some who believed that men's souls were immortal. Many of these men lived celibate, despising women. But in the southern district where Eolon dwelt and in most other districts such rigours were unknown. Young girls had as many lovers as they pleased and observed constancy only after marriage. The boy's mother was of the fairer race. In her land, as in the land whence Kyrion's forefathers had come, it was the custom for a chieftain's favourite wife to die when her lord died. Her kinsmen killed her on his grave, and the other wives—for the chiefs had many—wept with rage and mortification. Eolon had something of his mother's tall body, but his colour was dark, like his father's.

Until he was seven years old he lived very happily. He had no brothers and no sisters, then, to divide his mother's care; his father loved him. It happened that the priest had more science than was usual at that time. In his youth he had dwelt upon the coast, in a

city where many southerners came, traders and merchants, seeking the rich metal of the Thracian mines, the plentiful Thracian figs and oil and wine, and where travellers rested sometimes. The gales were such upon that coast that many ships entered the harbours and lay there that had not meant to. Here, being of a curious mind, he had learnt to trace and to read letters, both in the Thracian language and in Greek, to follow the movements of the stars in the Chaldean manner and to set down what he thus saw in figures. So, besides music, which every Thracian child practised in some measure, and dancing, which was part of his religious exercises, Eolon also learnt to speak in the two tongues and to read them, and to count. He, too, after he had reached manhood, was to be a priest of the mystic Dionysos. He had no liking for astronomy or arithmetic, and on the days when these were studied his father beat him. But in other matters he was quick enough. Above everything he loved music. While other children of his age could do no more than pipe the little tune that called the goats home from the mountains, he could play, upon a lyre that his father had made him, the airs that were attributed to Orpheus. Orpheus, the holy Thracian hero and musician, had lived somewhat further to the east, the people said, in the country of the Cicones. But his fame was spread over all those lands. Eolon had conceived an especial reverence for him.

While he was not with his father, or eating, or asleep, he led the herds to pasture or played with his fellows or helped his mother in her religious offices. He gathered flowers for her and helped to weave them into garlands, iris and crocus and anemone in their season, and the great snowdrops of the mountains that

smelt of honey, and the pink spears of the asphodel. Very early he learned to handle the snakes that were about the sanctuary, beasts that were sacred of themselves and sacred too, now that analogy and symbol were mixed with the older, simpler notion of power, as representatives of death and generation and children. As a virgin child with both parents living, hence full of purity and luck, he bore the sacred harvest fan containing fruit and cakes and phalluses in the ceremonies and processions. He knew the meaning and the use of these objects and the meaning and the use, also, of the gold serpent whereby, in the mystic marriage rites, the initiates became brides of the god. Indeed his mother taught him or allowed him to discover much that he would not otherwise have known till manhood. Even as a little child he thought often of these things.

But when he was seven years old his mother gave birth to another child, another son. Thereafter she had many children; the house was full of noise and of the smell of unwashed infants. And Eolon's joy was broken. In the kitchen where his mother had ever set aside the tastiest bits for him, in the chamber where he had lain alone beside his parents, babies sprawled and clamoured. If he wanted something of his mother, word or object, her lips, her hands, her very feet it seemed, were too entangled with the lips and hands of children to give the thing to him. A poor man would have exposed them, he reflected, upon the mountain, to starve or die of cold or be eaten by the beasts. But Eolon's father was rich. Besides the sacrifices that would have fed twenty such, fine gifts of gold were often made to the sanctuary. And his mother rejoiced in her new fertility. Yet Eolon

remained his father's favourite, so that he was happier during the hours when they studied together or worked side by side in the sanctuary or in the cave above it, conducting their holy business. Always there was a different note in the priest's voice when he spoke to strangers saying, "This is my firstborn."

As the boy grew older he sought more and more to be away from home. In the winter when the biting frosts, the heavy snows kept every man indoors, he spent his leisure at a friend's house. His companion was a small dark-headed boy whose chief pleasure was in carving wood. Eolon loved him. He felt envy of the images that the other cut, seeing that they received more thought, more caressing than he did himself. The little girls with whom, many years before manhood, he played at marriage, might pursue and kiss whom they pleased; if his friend sought another friend, Eolon's grief was scarcely tolerable. Some of the time his friend worked, while Eolon recited tales that he invented, or that he made from stories of the gods or from the famous adventures; and some of the time they talked of what they would do when they were men; and some of the time they disputed upon the best way of living or upon the nature and habits of the gods; and some of the time they played together. At other seasons Eolon went for pastime into the mountains. His friend seldom followed him. Save where he could use their outline in his carving, he had no love for the great hills, or for the streams that jumped over their faces, or for the trees, the cypresses and sycamores, the cedars and the holy pines, that grew upon their sides, or for the beasts that hid among them.

So Eolon went alone. He liked to climb up, beyond

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the sanctuary and the holy cave, to where he could see the many hills spread out and the wide corn-filled valley and the river, like a brilliant path below, and the bare peaks high above his head. Here in the scent and shadow of the pines, he liked to watch the sunset colour the hills, turning their green to scarlet, bright and sharp to the eye as fire against the bright-blue sky. Here he liked to watch the moon rise—the young moon, horned like the bull who was his god—the monstrous full moon that was the night ruler, the goddess. At other moments he pictured her as a woman, tall and wonderfully white in face and body. But as he looked at the huge white moon itself he knew only the excitement that spread over him, the sense of swelling, bursting at the heart, as though a part of him strove to break away, to escape into the vast ghostly freedom of the night. At times this wildness—which was, as he imagined, holy—came so near to rapture that he could bear it no longer and rolled upon the ground and kicked and clutched up handfuls of moss and earth. At other times it was near to utter wretchedness, so that he lay with his unhappy, bursting heart and wept.

During the days, in spring-time, he liked also to watch the swans fly over the hills, a moving lyre, grey or white according to how the light fell on it, alive with strange cries. And he liked, lying secret and still beneath some rock, beside some stream, to watch the animals, the vixens and their cubs rolling and biting and kicking together, or the mountain hares that turned aside when an enemy pursued them to seek running water and pass through it and so purify themselves and escape danger. But best of all he liked to play, alone, upon his harp, or to pipe to his herds,

making them obey him. Like his master Orpheus, he had power over the four-footed beasts and over the snakes that moved among the stones and grasses, and the little lizards that ran out over the rocks to warm themselves. If the goats were wicked he could soothe them, and if the cattle were restless at evening he could make them sleep. All this he did in memory of his dear master Orpheus, who had charmed beasts and men and rocks and spirits. He composed many poems in honour of his beloved, and sang them as he played.

So he reached manhood and the curious ceremony that made him bride of the god. After his initiation he thought more and more of the rites that he witnessed and administered and shared; he dreamed long and deeply of their hidden meanings. For now, among many of the wiser priests and holy men the ancient notion of power had altogether lost simplicity. Already those of the Ionian Greeks who called themselves philosophers were beginning to conceive of abstractions. It is true that, in their reasonable way, their first search was for material matters. They studied the stars, not like their spiritual fathers, the Chaldean astrologers and magicians, in order to predict men's fate or to work sorcery, but to discover how the heavenly bodies moved, by what laws. They sought also the truths of mathematics and geometry. They asked of what substance the world was made, whether it had sprung from water or air or earth or fire. But they were speculative as well as reasonable, and in their examination of the physical world they were fast going towards the question of what had first stirred the primordial element—was it self-moving; did the principles of heat and cold, of dryness and moisture,

war among themselves and so produce life; had thought been the spark that first woke matter? These questions had not yet been definitely formulated. For the moment it was still half-believed that generation had made life, birth after birth of gods and men. But the shadow of them had fallen across men's minds. If it is true that the poet Hesiod said that Love was among the firstborn of Chaos and the Universal Egg, he, too, had conceived of an abstraction.

However this may be, although the plain men knew nothing of such things and the priests little, the idea of a power different from the old, working according to laws unknown, hung before the men's eyes. In the old days power, the force that was in all things, living and inanimate, had been as precise and well-defined as the kick of a man's toe. The priest could move mountains—so he thought—as simply as he could shift a footstool. Later, losing a little of the faith he had in his omnipotence, he thought that he moved them through the power of a god whose goodwill he obtained, induced, compelled by his most efficacious ceremonies. But now, with this new fancy floating here and there of a power that was material and yet not material, part of the world and yet not part, the priests became confused. Expressing the new notion after their fashion, they said that all power was of the gods. But in a thousand ways, by the invention of new holy stories, by a new understanding of the old, by variations in their use of words, in their interpretations of the symbols, they betrayed their sense that it did not come as directly, as literally as they had first supposed. They did not know it, but their thought, their faith, was shaken. With the sorcerers and witches, they still believed that power could be

used direct, that the ceremonies were of themselves efficacious, yet they believed also that behind the plain truth were other truths, hidden, mysterious. Some were content with the mystery, choosing only to increase it by adding dark words to dark words, strange rite to strange rite; others were groping for a new light that would illuminate these dim places also.

Eolon's father was of these seekers. He did not acknowledge that he sought ; his faith in Dionysos, son of the divine, and in the Mother goddess, seemed clear and whole to him. Yet he spoke constantly of the benefit that the new sciences were conferring on mankind. "Thales has proved," he would say, "by foretelling the movements of our mother Moon, that there is law and order in the universe. We knew that this was so. It would be blasphemy to say otherwise. In truth there is a universal law. Our holiest work is to direct it. And the Chaldeans deliver oracles by looking at the heavens as surely as I can by examining the entrails of a goat or as some do by taking many little sticks and shuffling them. For, besides the link that is between all things, binding them together, certain things are linked by an especial correspondence. Such as the movements of the stars and the movements of men's hearts. But this is not generally admitted. They say that among the empty-minded Greeks, in those places where our lord Dionysos is unknown, they deny the universal nature of the divine. So it is well for men's happiness that the holy harmony should be displayed in as many ways as may be. Thales has displayed it by astronomy. Arithmetic displays it also." But try as he might, Eolon could not keep his mind on numbers or on measuring, or on the curious configurations of the heavens. His dullness made his father

sad. "Alas," he sighed. "I had hoped you would be greater than Thales, having divine as well as earthly wisdom. I can never be a Sage. I am too old . . ." From that time on, he ceased to teach him.

The young man's concern was all for the strange, the hidden things of his religion. He brooded on its darkness and its prodigies, upon the wonder, for example, that sometimes appeared on the festival of the god when the glory of Dionysos flashed forth in a great light from the darkness of the sanctuary. The brightness did not appear each year, but only, the people said, when the god promised an unusually fine harvest. He dwelt upon the madness that possessed the people when, having with their double axes slain the bull Dionysos, they ate his flesh, and so, filled with his life-giving blood and strength, became united with the god. He liked to reflect upon their new purity, as of a transparent pebble washed in spring water, after he had smeared them with mud and filth and rubbed them clean again, removing thereby the secret evil and danger that was in them, as it was in the new fruits of the earth before they, too, had been made safe by ceremonies. There was evil everywhere, he thought, danger unseen yet very potent; and there was the good that he and his father and his mother gave to the world through their knowledge and their power, good corn, good meat, good comfort.

From those of the northern Getæ tribe who visited the sanctuary, he learned of their belief in the survival of man's soul, and this notion, as he pondered it, became mingled with his other notions. The idea was simple, easily understood. His own faith, indeed, which was not the faith of the common folk but of the priests and initiates, thinking people, bade him believe

that by becoming one with his god he shared in the god's immortality, even as he shared his strength, his liveliness, everything that was his. But the immortality of a god who died and lived again year after year and who yet endured forever, was not a clear, defined thing. It was a mystic matter, known to the blood rather than to the mind. It was of those ideas that had become ever more complex with the years, and Eolon, as yet, had not reflected on it deeply.

But of his soul he had thought often. It was, he fancied, a tiny person, like himself but wee as the image in a man's eye, and resident somewhere in his bosom with his breath, with which it was intimately connected. Some said that it was connected also with his eyes and with that image in them. He imagined that it had wings, since it could travel here and there during his body's sleep and since at death it flew altogether away. As for its birthplace, some said that it was of the wind, which was a great breath, and some that it was of the earth and that snakes were unborn children, and some said other things, but always that the soul came from some lively place, for only life gave life. Such were the ancient conceptions of the soul that Eolon and his father still believed. But to them he had added, during his more youthful ponderings on the hillside, many dreams and fancies. His soul, which an evil sorcerer could put, if he chose, into a pot, could cause to hang, like a sleeping bat, upon a tree, could kill by hammering a nail into a little image, might likewise, by a kindlier magic, be set in some swift creature, a swan, perhaps, so that it could fly off over the hills to the lands he longed to visit, to Athens, gay and wise, to holy Lydia and Phrygia where so many men believed and worshipped as he did, to

Crete, home of the mysteries. So it was that when the people of the Getæ told him that his soul could go, not only to far lands in this life but to farther, happier lands after his death, he was enchanted. Now on the mountains he lay and pictured himself dying, pictured himself dead and hurrying to the Getæ heaven, which was the home of their king-god Zalmoxis. He did not people it, in the Getæ fashion, with magnificent horses and splendid hunting, but with musicians whose music was lovelier than any sound on earth and wine that gave a more lasting joy and women whose love brought greater pleasure. The Getæ had many other curious notions. It was their habit, every five years, to kill some good and holy man and so send his soul as a messenger to Zalmoxis. In this way they made their wishes and requests known to their god. But in Southern Thrace these deaths were for purification. Each year a man was killed by stoning, that he might rid the people and the land of every evil. At other seasons men did not kill their fellows, whether as gods or victims. Eolon's dear master Orpheus was said to have forbidden such bloodshed.

Eolon also reflected long and deeply upon the words of those other northerners who said that life was a weariness and an affliction and that only death was good. Death could but be good, he thought, if indeed the soul survived the body and went to receive the joys and the rewards that it had missed on earth in an everlasting, happy heaven. That bursting at the heart that he had known as a young boy when he had lain and looked at the white moon, at the red or golden sun, at his sweet namesake dawn, rising colour by colour over the furthest hills—that wild delight and agonising melancholy that had been more exquisite, he sometimes

thought, than any holy feeling save his first vision of the Flame Dionysos—such longings and such yearnings, he felt sure, could only have been his soul's craving to be free, to escape from the pains and dangers of the flesh into eternal happiness.

For always in his contemplation the sadder aspects of the world were uppermost. Eolon was not happy in those years. His early ecstasies and agonies had left him; to see the flame flash in the sanctuary no longer brought the same sense of blessedness, of deep fulfilment; he scarcely felt the wonder, after he had eaten of the bull and flung himself down upon the ground, of being god incarnate. Even his dreams of a joyful heaven through constant repetition passed. He did not spend all his time in religious practises and meditation. Indeed it often happened that a sudden roughness seized him and he would seek out the noisiest, rudest of his fellows, the fierce huntsmen of the hills, and drink and dance and fight with them. He liked to show them that, priest though he was, his muscles were as hard as theirs, that he could fling an axe as far or throw a bull as nimbly as they could. It entertained him to frighten them by taking a great snake to their feastings and sitting with it twined about his neck, or to astonish them by pulling out his flute and making the creature dance to his music. Sometimes he put on a fox-skin cap such as they wore above the long striped cloak that was the Thracian costume, and went with them to hunt in the mountains.

But these amusements soon wearied him, even as friendship wearied him now and drunkenness and women. Music itself had lost its charm; the airs and poems that he composed in these years were but copies, variations of other men's inventions. His early

pleasure in the company of his friend was almost gone. And as for women, their kisses were sweet but unimportant. It was many years since the first of the little dancers, the dark, slim-legged girls who followed the priests and priestesses in the processions, had caught his hand and pulled him to her mother's stable, into the straw that smelt of its own rottenness and of sour milk and dung. She also had smelt of beasts and sodden grasses. Save that some were fatter and some more thin, the other dancers, all the women he encountered, were like her. Bitterly he looked back to his furthest, most childish days, when in his dreams, as was fitting in a novice, he had been united with a tall woman whose face and flesh were white and honey-scented as the snowdrops, and who was, he felt sure, the moon, the goddess. But that had been a mystic joy, having to do with his priesthood. Since he had known dancing girls such delights had gone. Of all his childhood's visions, the one that still lingered, still gave him ease, was of the holy musician Orpheus.

CHAPTER II

When he was in his twenty-fifth year the opportunity for which he had been looking, longing, for want of which his heart had secretly grown sour, came to Eolon.

It happened that a stranger visited the sanctuary. The shrine beside the Strymon was very famous. Men came to it from every part of Thrace; and sometimes also foreigners, men of the south, sought out the wonder of the flame that flashed from it when Dionysos was favourable. For the mystic god was beginning to be loved in Greece. His full history was not yet known; the priests of the Olympians were but preparing the sacred stories that told how the rustic wine-god Dionysos, the tree, the goat, the phallus, was in truth the son of Zeus by the Theban Semele. But already in certain places he had ceased to be a peasant's god, and everywhere men, loving his gift of wine, were ready to learn more of his wisdom and his strangeness. Yet visitors, whether they looked for mystic learning or merely for entertainment or new trade, were still rare in Thrace. When a stranger came who was a man of note or wealth, his passing was watched from one end of the land to the other; from Mount Hæmus to the sea the tribes knew his name, his looks, his business. On this occasion a thousand rumours preceded the traveller. His name was Mycon and he was a citizen of Athens; he was a friend of the powerful Athenian general Pisistratus, leader of factions and cousin of the law-giver Solon. It was said that he was

travelling for pleasure, and indeed in the places where he had rested he had bought or sold nothing, had asked few questions. Yet he had gone from city to city and from shrine to shrine; he had seen the rich mines and the fertile valleys; he had made many friends among the fierce-tempered men; and Eolon's father, before he met and spoke with him, swore that he was an emissary of the intriguing Athenians, a spy sent out to view the land in the interests of war or trade or some political business.

But on the day when Eolon found his father in deepest conversation with a black-eyed, round-bodied stranger, dressed in the dress of Athens, he knew that such suspicions were forgotten. The two sat upon stones beside the priest's house, beneath the shadow of its mighty fig-tree. Because it was summer the fat figs dropped from time to time. The youngest of Eolon's brothers and sisters gathered them, while others refilled the cups from which their father and his guest were drinking. But the speakers were so intent upon their talk that neither heeded the golden fruit, nor the children, nor the broad valley stretched before them, nor the goatherds that passed sometimes with their pipes and their beasts, returning home. They paused for but an instant as Eolon drew near and his father said, "This is my firstborn, the young man of whom I spoke," and the stranger's shrewd eyes appraised him quickly. Eolon sat down at their feet and listened while they resumed their conversation. And he also, then, knew nothing save their words and the excitement that ran over his own body, flowing from them.

It seemed that after they had spoken of the religious matters that were usual at such meetings and after

they had praised Dionysos each in his own fashion, they had come to discuss the new love for him that was spreading in Greece, in Corinth and in Sicyon, and more lately in Attica, and the great honours that would surely belong to those who went to Athens now and taught to men his holy mysteries and orgies. Here was a great work, they were saying, promising great glory. Which of the two had first put forth the notion Eolon could not say, but it was plainly agreed between them that of all men a young priest of the most famous Thracian sanctuary, son of its high priest, a youth of fair presence, learned and able to speak the Attic tongue, would be the best fitted for this work and would, if he had friends and guidance and some gold, achieve the highest place. For only a Thracian, Eolon's father said, could give the true initiation; only from Thrace, home of the purest, strongest faith, could true rapture and true wisdom flow. And Eolon, hearing him, rejoiced extremely. Already he saw himself in the southern city, sweet to his fancy as its own mountain honey, leading the purblind people with his music and his spells, even as his dear master Orpheus, even as he himself, had often led the erring herds to safety.

The time was ripe, Mycon was saying, for the magnifying of the mystic Son. "The men of Athens are naturally pious," he said. "They reverence the gods and fear evil." But a restlessness, a stirring was upon them; they were growing weary of the thoughtless Olympians. Unknown to themselves they sought a deeper, truer joy—just such a joy indeed, as Eolon's father said, as that which Dionysos gave when he possessed his lovers or when he yielded himself to them to be devoured in the mountains. In every case

it seemed that new ceremonies, new preachers were welcome in Athens. Whenever there was affliction among them, which was often enough, the people turned hopefully to foreign heavens. A new divinity, they thought, with new strange rites, would surely bring new comfort, new healing. And at times the rulers themselves looked for help or for reform. Solon, some while before, had invited the Cretan Sage Epimenides, he who had slept for fifty-seven years within a cave and wakened again, to visit Athens, that he might rid the city of the pollution that the murder of Cylon, the would-be tyrant, had put upon it. In those days Athens was sick and very much afraid; after the sacrilege, which was the killing of Cylon, the blood-guilt had lain in fear and pestilence upon the people. "She is not sick now," Mycon said; "but she is troubled. Great changes are coming to pass in the fate of cities and the souls of men. And there is no Epimenides!" He went on to tell them how, after the Cretan had cleansed the city of the vengeful ghosts, he had been revered almost as a god. Besides the especial purifications needed for the especial defiling, he had introduced many new, strange Cretan rites. Since his day men had been more inclined towards mystic matters. "Yet Epimenides left us no god, no clear image that would live in the hearts and eyes and hands of men," the stranger said. Whereupon Eolon's father flung up his hands. "They shall know the true Dionysos!" he cried, and his eyes turned proudly, met Eolon's proud answering look. Yet Eolon saw that beneath their pride his father's eyes were sad.

In that hour, beneath the holy fig-tree, it was decided that Eolon should go to Athens. Mycon

would do all in his power, he said, to help and guide him. He would put him in the company of others of his kind and of such citizens as were concerned with mystic piety. He would bring him, if he could, to the notice of Pisistratus himself, who was the greatest man, he swore, in Athens, and an ardent lover of religion. That Eolon might be warned, that he might know beforehand who were his natural enemies and who the friends that would most quickly bring him to success, Mycon told him something of the troubles that were in Athens at that time, the strife between the men of the coast, shipbuilders and seafarers, and the men of the land, the country-folk, and how this disputing had so divided up the city that there was no peace and no sound government anywhere. "But it must end, it will end soon," he said. "Pisistratus will save Athens!" And so Eolon was made aware that in all his dealings with the Athenians he must avoid the men of the sea, the party of the Shore, as it was called, and equally those of the Plain, and cling only to the men of the Hill, which was the party of Pisistratus. "He is very wealthy," Mycon said. "He is a very clever leader. He is as able in peace as he was strong in war. And he is very pious. Solon, who loved him once, says that no man is better disposed than he. When he is chief in Athens all men will be happy, all men will seek the truth." Of this talk of Hill and Plain and Shore, matters far removed from him and difficult to understand, Eolon kept only a vision of a mighty prince, lover of Dionysos, who would build temples fairer than any yet seen, wherein priests would move in splendid robes, full of pride and wisdom, ruling the people.

The night before his journey, Eolon left his bed

and went alone, for the last time, into the mountains. He took with him the golden lyre that his father had given to him as a parting gift, together with a store of gold for himself and another store for Mycon. He had embraced his friend. Of the little dancer whom he had loved lately he had not thought, and so did not visit her. Alone, for the last time, he lay breast to breast upon the holy earth, watched the moon goddess rise from her sleeping earthly shape and soar and float, saw the first colours of the dawn climb up. And in that hour his music returned to him. As the sun leaped from the hills he struck his lyre and sang a new triumphant song to Orpheus and Dionysos.

So Eolon left his home and came into the crowds, the narrow tortuous streets, the noise, the heat of Athens. And the enchantment that thought and desire and the words of Mycon had put upon him held his senses. Going to the house of Mycon, the first day, he was so dazed by his own exultation and by the strangeness, after his long sea voyage, that his mind could say no more to him than "I am in Athens," as he gazed at the clattering people, at the unfamiliar buildings. The little houses were huddled close as penned sheep between the hills, below the rock citadel. The ground was dust and refuse; the hot sun beat down. As in a dream he recognised his patron's sharp black eyes and sturdy limbs. Mycon's words of welcome were mingled in his ears with echoes of his journey, with the sound of waves hissing, of his companions, sailors and merchants, shouting, cursing, vomiting, with the long, hooting cry that rang when land was sighted. Mycon thanked him for his gifts, promised him, again, his friendship and his help,

though he was too engaged, he said, upon political business, to advance Eolon now. He directed him to an inn where he could live well and safely. "You will find friends there," he said. "And I will send you word later."

But during the next days, while he was still alone and a stranger, wandering through the streets, he was stirred to an ever-increasing pleasure, an ever-increasing love. As a man may seek out each little thing about his mistress, doting the more upon blemishes that make her pitiful and therefore the more his, he sought out each aspect of the city, serene or noisy, rich or scarred by poverty and by neglect. He went from quiet and sweet scents to clamour and the dirt of houses that emptied themselves into the streets; from the dark lanes of the workers' quarter where plaster cracked and fell upon his head, where garbage at times splashed suddenly from the house-tops, threatening the fine striped Thracian cloak his mother had put upon his shoulders, to the groves and meadows where many of the nobles had their homes, amidst streams and ancient olive trees. Entranced he stood before the small square temples whose painted tufa walls daubed the streets, crowned the rock citadel, with sharpest reds and blues and greens and yellows, brighter than any flowers. Perched on the rock that had once been the whole town, beside the palace of the ancient kings, now falling into ruins, was the house that the Goddess shared with her Son, she, the Maid of Athens, virgin yet mother, he, the snake, the god, the hero Erechtheus. Before it was a troop of carved girls and youths, figures set up as offerings by wealthy worshippers to keep their souls before the goddess, close to hers—muscly boys and large-eyed maidens, painted also in bright colours,

who stood stiffly by, their hands to their sides, staring. They moved Eolon as truly as if they had been living and as if his arms, not his eyes only, embraced them. With the same sense of achievement and delight he rested in the tavern of the inn that Mycon had commended to him. Above his head hams hung, with bundles of garlic and of onions to give virtue to the house and to the food. The air was loud with men's voices arguing in the stench of smoking lamps and burning grease and meat and wine.

The tavern was a meeting-place of those who called themselves the party of the Hill, the followers of Pisistratus. Its paunchy landlord, carrying his belly and his incessant speech from group to group, boasted that he was a Hillsman in the strictest sense, being of the Ikarian mountaineers whose poverty and isolation Pisistratus especially championed and who had first given the party its name. "We are poor, ignorant folk," he repeated, "yet Pisistratus loves us. He is the true friend of the people." For the talk was always of the political troubles that distressed the city, the disputing of the Plain, the Shore, the Hill, of which Mycon had spoken, and the bitterness that was between the patricians and the people. With the landlord's a score of voices rose, praising Pisistratus, cursing his enemies, relating the latest stories of blood-feuds that envenomed the parties' leaders and increased their hatred, or discussing somewhat more soberly the laws that had, some said, first caused the strife. Excited faces grinned; fists moved up and down in rage or pleasure.

And Eolon, watching and listening, although abstractedly, held by his vision of Athens' wonder and his own future, came in a little while to understand more

clearly the rivalries that tore his beloved city and the hidden conflicts that lay behind. He learnt of the curse that lay upon the Shore and that made men afraid—the blood of the tyrant whom the forefathers of its leaders had slain in the sanctuary of the Goddess; he learnt of Solon and why his laws were held by one man to be good and by another more dangerous than tyranny. For Solon had left many discontented, the nobles saying that his laws harmed them unduly, the workers complaining that those same laws, which pretended to create democracy, had given power only to the leisured. But Solon had made the city rich; the traders and the ships that carried their merchandise prospered; there was much now in goods and gold for men to quarrel over. And always, after their difficulties had come to seem insoluble, their distresses and the disorder that was growing in the land past remedy, “Pisistratus will save us,” the speakers concluded. “He is the great fighter who won us back Nisæa. He is a noble of the nobles yet he loves the people.” So that, against this mist of hot words, of passions that still seemed remote to him and scarcely comprehensible, Eolon saw ever the figure of a handsome soldier, brave, clever, generous, who revered the gods and sought to make men happy.

He learnt also of matters that touched him more closely. The names of gods passed constantly in and out of the confusion, and this speaker would call upon “Zeus, Defender of Oaths,” to strike him dead if he lied; and that one would cry upon the Angry Fates, of their bird nature, to fly away with any who disagreed with them, or to the Harpies to make droppings on his food; or a third would pray to the Avenging Furies, the Death Snakes, to “destroy his enemy

utterly, him and his house!" Many chance words spoke of Athena, the goddess whose stone servants were the lovers of Eolon's fancy and for whose virgin divinity, it seemed, Pisistratus had a particular devotion. From a cousin of the landlord, a man named Alexander who became his fast friend in that noisy place, Eolon discovered further matters of a holy sort that interested and astonished him extremely.

Alexander was of low condition. At times, after they had got into frequent conversation, Eolon wondered were such the companions that Mycon had intended for him; and later, when he grew friendly with another of the tavern's visitors, Polycles, an elegant and scholarly youth, scribe in the household of Pisistratus, he felt some shame of his first friend's humility. But Alexander, like Eolon, held himself aloof; like Eolon's, his thoughts were turned from the hubbub about him to the dark or luminous places where the gods dwelt. Standing in a corner of the inn, he told Eolon many tales that served to make the others' talk intelligible, stories of Athena, who was maid and queen upon the citadel yet in the workers' quarter, though still a maid, was more the Mother, being wedded, as the Earth had been, to Hephæstus; of Poseidon, Attica's son of Fruitfulness and Water, now ruler of the sea; of Hephæstus, the god of fire and of crafts whom the potters and the smiths and all the artisans worshipped; of Deo and of that other earth-maid, Persephone, her daughter, Bride and Queen of the Underworld; and of many more.

But especially Alexander liked to speak, and Eolon to hear, of the god who haunted his own native hills, the wine-god who was yet more than a spirit of the vines. Above Marathon, where Pisistratus had a

country house and great estates, in the Ikarian mountains, Dionysos had a little sanctuary. Pisistratus knew of the shrine, the speaker said; he had sacrificed to the god of his most faithful followers, though only as a man might—the true initiates and priestesses were women. “All night long they howl about him,” Alexander said. “He appears to them in many shapes. He is a ram. He is a kid, and they devour him. And he is many other things they will not speak of. He flashes in the sun itself as it rises for the first time at the turn of the year, in winter. Their clothes are stiff with snow when they return home. They sleep where they have fallen, they are so weary.” “They love the Bull!” Eolon cried in amazement. “They love the Thracian Son!” and in his turn he began to tell his friend of the joys that the true Dionysos gave, the delights that might be shared by all men if they chose. He hinted at the rites, which he could not describe for they were secrets, that made the initiate bride of the god and partaker in him and in his felicity. And Alexander listened eagerly, warmed by the thought of an ecstasy that was not of wine only but of union with the god, soul to soul and body to body. Yet he would not have it that his god was not, first, a god of wine. “He came to us,” he repeated. “It is well known of ancient times. Our king Icarus entertained him. He stood before us men and gave us wine, even as Deo gave the young kings and the women corn.” If, by chance, another of the mountaineers drew near and overheard Eolon, he would shake his head. The rude hillsmen were bewildered by the revelation. The landlord, Alexander’s cousin, came near to anger. “Wine’s holiness is good enough for us,” he said. “I sell it. Our fathers own vineyards.

Such foreign talk is nonsense!" His eyes followed Eolon, after that, with a mingling of suspicion and of awe, as one whose spells might spoil trade though they could increase the power of a god the landlord worshipped and to whom Pisistratus had made sacrifice.

Eolon tried to persuade them. "The joys I mean are truer joys than drunkenness," he said. But Alexander alone hesitated, seeming to seek a clearer understanding. The others would not listen. It was after an exchange of this sort that Eolon came, one evening, to speak for the first time with Polycles. The scholar, hearing him, mocked at his attempts to convert the clownish hillsmen. Polycles, as Eolon soon discovered, was unusually learned. He knew Dionysos by all his names. He knew each one of Homer's tales and could recite them. His eyes watched the turmoil of the inn as though they marked but did not judge, so that he looked old, although he was in fact younger than Eolon by many years. "To these men," he said, "wine is wine and gods are gods—as real as wine-cups. What do they know of other truths?" Eolon, smitten by the young man's tone, dared not reply that he, also, knew nothing of other truths, and that the joys that he had meant were as real as the pleasures of a lover with a mistress, although they might be enjoyed in fancy as well as in the flesh. He now, like Alexander, hesitated, wondering suddenly if his knowledge were not less than that of Polycles. He remembered how his father, in far off Thrace, had speculated at times, asking if the gods' powers were not somewhat different from the might—as of a strong hand, a thunderbolt, a kiss—of which he spoke to the common people; whether indeed the raptures that

Dionysos gave were not resident in some unknown region, not wholly of the body or of the mind, and so were less real than men's love, although more real in another sense that Eolon did not understand, that his father could not explain, but that the southern wisdom was aware of. Especially he remembered his father's words concerning the greatness of that southern wisdom, and so now, fearing to display ignorance, he did not speak but listened while Polycles talked on of the true nature of the gods, which was, he said, immaterial, mysterious. "But you cannot teach these things to the mob," he ended. "By rites and ceremonies they can be made to feel the truth, to possess it with their bodies and so to be happy and to love and respect their masters. The mysteries that we have at Eleusis give comfort. Yours of Thrace and the Phrygian and the Lydian are more impressive and so more useful. I know them all and have divined their hidden meaning. But the common people cannot understand. There must ever be two wisdoms, one for the wise and one, which does not indeed deserve the name, for the vulgar."

CHAPTER III

But at this first meeting in the tavern they did not talk long of holy things. After they had sat a while and drunk together and told each other something of themselves, Polycles bade Eolon go with him to his father's house where there would be good wine, he said, and much discourse that night. Pisistratus would be there, maybe, and Mycon, for it seemed that the traveller was a friend of Polycles and of his family. And reflecting upon this, Eolon was struck with suspicion and asked himself had the youth been set to watch him, to see how he spoke and acted before offering friendship and the Hill's intimacy. The question came, he thought, from his father's spirit, which was very near to him that night, sent out no doubt by some spell that the priest was making, in love and solicitude for his son. The priest, besides his first fear of Mycon, had ever warned Eolon against the Greeks, saying that every Athenian was a false man, working by devious ways towards his own hidden advantage. But Eolon had heard so much, in those first lonely days, of spies and plots, betrayals and lies, that perhaps, he thought again, his question was but an echo, an exhalation from other men's suspicions. In every case he was eager to look on Athens' wealthier, wiser face and on Pisistratus.

So he agreed very happily, and they went out into the streets. The city was pitch-dark, for there was no moon and the stars' light could not reach down between the houses. Here and there an open tavern door flung

a feeble ray into the darkness, with the never-changing stench of burning oil and sour wine and food; and sometimes, although rarely, a flicker of torches shone where men hurried along, going in groups to avoid thieves or other molestation. The only sound was a clamour as of men shouting far away, the noise of the workers revelling, Polycles said, with their fire-god Hephæstus; or when a rider clattered by, forcing the two to flatten themselves against the walls, to escape the horse's hoofs and the flying refuse. Once a fine litter passed them with many runners, and Eolon caught a glimpse of a tall, fair-haired patrician woman, lying well protected by her curtains and her torches and her servants, as Solon's strict laws decreed. "The woman do not like this new way," Polycles said. "They say that it makes them dull and interferes with their religious practices." Eolon wondered if his new friend had sisters, tall, yellow-headed girls whose legs would stretch gracefully upon cushions. Polycles was fair of skin and not ill-looking.

But in the hall to which his friend presently brought him, there were no women. The place was very brightly lit. A crowd of men were in it, talking noisily. And at first Eolon was utterly bewildered by the lights and by the buzz of voices, which he had not expected. The guests' dress and looks were cleaner than those to which he was generally accustomed; a smell of perfume was in the air; the many lamps shone on the brilliant-painted birds and beasts and fish and monsters that were on the walls, and on the beds that were decked with many-coloured stuffs, and on the cups and vases, which were fairer than any Eolon had pictured in Thrace when he evoked the southern glories. And staring at them, he scarcely saw these things, although

he was conscious that Mycon was not there, that every face was strange to him. He could but stand and gape and feel, in a passion of dazed anger, that to the men who glanced quickly at his striped cloak and turned again to their discussions, he was perhaps the barbarian that all his countrymen were said to be, uncouth, odd of speech, fierce of eye, dirty.

He would have liked, then, to do some wild or splendid thing, to strike the paved and patterned floor magically, so that milk or honey or wine flowed from it, as the priests and priestesses of Dionysos had done in past ages; or merely to sing of his god or dance a sacred dance in his honour. "Father!" he prayed. "O holy Dionysos! O Orpheus, my master!" But his friend held his arm and led him to where a tallish man, some ten or twelve years older than Eolon, who was the scholar's father, looked him up and down and greeted him with astonishment, but not unkindly. And Polycles bade the slaves give him wine, which he drank at one draught, following the habit of his countrymen. After this a measure of ease returned to him, with pride. He thought: "They are but Greeks. I am the first priest of the Thracian Dionysos." And forgetting his earlier resolve to go silently and prudently, he began to speak to Polycles of Thrace and of its many faiths; and seeing that his friend at once displayed marked interest and curiosity, he was a little comforted. About them the guests chattered, even as the guests in the tavern chattered, although a trifle less loudly and with less angry gesture; and the matter of their speech was the same, being all of the Hill's doings and of Pisistratus.

While he stood thus apart with Polycles, talking and drinking, a boy came up to them. "This is the

younger son of Pisistratus," Polycles said. The boy stared at Eolon, not half-contemptuously as the older men had done, but with open surprise and pleasure. "You are from Thrace!" he said. "You are a bull-eater! Is it true that you eat it raw, bones and blood and sinews?" And Eolon pulled himself up to his full height and drew his cloak about him. "There is no greatness," he said; "but in Dionysos and in Orpheus, his servant." "Who is Orpheus?" the boy asked, and Eolon started to speak again, telling them of the saint's wondrous powers and of his music. The boy listened with shining eyes, and Polycles, too, continued to display considerable interest, although he already knew, he said, of the magical musician. When Eolon spoke of the poems that he had composed for his master, Polycles took him again by the arm and led into the courtyard of the house and giving him a lyre bade him sing for them. And Eolon did so, lifting his head to the night and to the hidden night goddess. Indeed he was so moved by wine and his own melody that after he had sung one song in Thracian he improvised another in the Grecian tongue, to Orpheus and to the world's Moon Mistress, whom the Greeks sometimes called Artemis. And Polycles liked the poems so well that he asked Eolon to repeat them that he might set the words and the music down upon his tablets.

During the second singing of the song, as he stood with his chin raised, looking upward, it seemed to Eolon that he saw lights moving in the galleries above his head. It was as though hidden ears listened to him. But the applause of his companions put the thought from him. He was given wholly to his pleasure in having done honour to his god, as he had longed to do,

and he praised Dionysos and his father's spirit, who had granted his prayer. Presently cries from within the hall of "Pisistratus!" "Beloved of Athena!" told them that the leader of the Hill had arrived, and they ran to the door, and Eolon looked upon the man of whom he had heard so much and saw that he was indeed a fine-looking soldier, worthy to be loved, handsome of face and gracious of manner. Yet he did not speak with Pisistratus that night. The general did no more than walk through the hall, smiling and laying a hand on his friends' shoulders in passing, and on into another chamber where for the rest of the evening he and his host remained closeted.

Later, after he had left the house and come again into the streets' blackness, Eolon remembered the moving lights and the ears that he had pictured listening. For he had gone only a little way when a hand plucked his cloak and a voice whispered please would he turn back, there was a noble lady wished to see and speak with him and give him love, if he wished, and feasting. And Eolon's joy was fulfilled and he turned quickly and followed the slave girl who had called him. Everything was quiet now. Even the revellers of Hephæstus were silent. The night was passing, and a pale light was in the sky, though not enough for Eolon to see the twisted alleys, the dark yards and passages through which they went, stealing like lynxes, he thought, like the snakes he loved, through the shadows. It was a strange and wondrous omen, he told himself, that he should enter thus with his namesake dawn, into the arms of his first Athenian lover.

He passed through another yard, a door, mounted a stair and came at last into a dim room where, beside

a table on which were wine and meat and flowers, a woman lay, half-hidden in the shadows. The slave girl vanished, and Eolon went towards the table and the shadowy woman. He had imagined that she would be bold, with great eyes that stared before her and long limbs, firmly rounded, and proud though eager lips. Or else—for even as he crossed the room his dream changed—she would be cold and very white, like some strange white stone image of the moon, unpainted, shining. But this woman, though he found her pale, was not so gleaming white, and though her boldness was manifest, since she had summoned him to love her, the eyes she raised to his were almost timid. She breathed fast as though her heart were oppressed, and her hands, as she signed to him to draw nearer, wavered.

“I heard your music,” she said, and before she told him Eolon guessed that she was the mother of his friend Polycles. And remembering the contemptuous glance that her husband had given him, he was glad and at once took her in his arms, which was, in every case, his habit with women. She was not young and yet she was not old. He knew that her face and her pleasure would have pleased many men, so that his pride increased as he rested presently beside her and she told him how she had peeped from the gallery while he was singing and had thought his face and voice so strange and moving that she could not let him go. She served him with meat and with the honeyed wine, and Eolon, finding himself hungry, ate and drank with considerable comfort. She talked eagerly, making a hurried to and fro of words in the dim room where the dawn crept, stealing over them. The increasing light humbled the little lamps, turned the woman’s

face to a yet paler, ashen hue, deepened the shadows that were about her eyelids and her lips.

He would have preferred her quiet, stretched out silently in the grey light. But she leaned towards him, clasped his hands. It was as though, freed from her first shyness, she sought to give him, after her body, her mind, her life; and it was as though she sought to excuse what she had done both in her own eyes and in his. Eolon did not feel himself concerned with any of these things. His vanity made him believe her when she said that she had never before called a lover to her, that, until now, she had been a faithful wife. But his mind whispered that she lied. In Thrace wives were constant; if they were not, custom held them worthy of death, accursed. "My husband does not love me," she said. "The law would have a man visit even a barren wife three times a month. But from moon to moon I never see his face, I who have borne him children. You will return to me again, Eolon? You will not forget my love? You are so strange. It is surely the goddess who has put this madness on me. Since she has brought you here she will not punish us." Her gentle hands caressed him, and her eyes, that were still afraid and as though astonished, questioning, gazed up into his face. Although she pleased him, although her words promised a continuance of comfort and of pride, Eolon knew well that the wonder he had pictured as he hurried through the darkness was not his.

Yet her love blessed Eolon. As he left her his feet trod easily; the security that the learning of Polycles and the sight of the fine hall and of the finely-dressed, chattering guests had shaken, was altogether restored

to him. Once again his joy in Athens was complete and he breathed the air, he looked about him, with all of his first sense of achievement and delight. From that night on he visited her whenever he felt disposed. There was a signal, and the slave girl stood ready to admit him. And after he had loved and supped he spoke to her of himself and of his mission and questioned her concerning the ways of her son and of the other scholars of the city, their beliefs and their habits and such matters as interested him and his future. She could not tell him much. She lived alone among her maids; to receive friends that were women and to go with her slaves to holy festivals and celebrations were her only entertainments; she knew less even of her son than of her husband. "Polycles is very clever," she said. "Almost as clever as you are, Eolon, although he is so young. He does not care for women, my maids say, nor greatly for men. His learning and his ambitions are all he lives for. But I don't know what they are." Yet Eolon was satisfied. It was enough now when he spoke with the son that he should have made the father cuckold. His tongue was loosened; a boldness more permanent than wine's gave his mind serenity.

For he and Polycles were become fast friends. Together they went about the city and the countryside, together they sought out the shrines where the simple people, in their unenlightened way, adored the wine-god, the fruitful son, Dionysos. In a place called the Marshes, below Athens, was a rustic sanctuary. Here Eolon saw the offerings that the peasants had hung up, rude images and cakes and phalluses and heads of goats sacrificed while the worshippers loved and feasted in the spring-time, celebrating the marriage

of their god. "They know the true Son," Eolon said again. "He is born in winter with the little sun. He loves, he dies in the spring-time." And walking back that morning through the olive groves, Athena's holy trees, beside the stream Ilissos, they talked again of the nature of the gods, and Eolon, listening with a clearer mind, began to think that he understood what his friend meant when he declared that true divinity was not of this earth, that it died and lived, not as men do but in another, immaterial way, that in fact it did not die but lived on eternally. For it was true, Eolon reflected, that Dionysos, who was slain each year to feed his worshippers, endured forever. The circumstance was a part of the mysteries that had often puzzled him. And he remembered also, listening to his friend, the hunger, the cravings that he had felt as a boy and that had been, he had thought later, his soul's craving to be free, to escape from the body's disappointments into an eternal gladness. Certain sights stirred that hunger. The sweetness that was about him now awakened it, the ancient trees and the shining of the water. It could come from the scent of flowers, which seemed scarcely of this earth, and from music, which was an altogether immaterial thing. Strong love, too, was akin to the same craving, Eolon thought, and his mind glanced back at the friend whom he had loved in Thrace and at his childhood's passion for the moon goddess. Yet though these longings might be of the flesh, no fleshly satisfactions could appease them. Only the uttermost ecstasies of holiness could stay their sharpness for a little while. And so he wondered if Polycles might not be right in saying that true divinity and therefore true delight were not of the body.

"They are of the soul!" he suddenly thought. And aloud he said: "If God is not of this world, neither is the soul." "That is possible," said Polycles. "There is a philosopher, Pherecydes of Syros, a friend of Pisistratus, who swears that the soul is immortal. He says that it goes from life to life. After each death it is born again in the body of a new man or of a new beast, so that we have all been at one time beasts or birds or fish or other men. Maybe the thought came to him from Thrace. He, too, loves your master, Orpheus."

Eolon walked on in silence. For a moment it had angered him to see that what had been a discovery to him, his sudden picture of the soul's nature and of its immortality, was a commonplace to Polycles. But this other notion that the soul could be reborn, that its immortality was of a succession of new lives, had so struck him that his first excitement was lost in his second, greater excitement, and his little anger forgotten in another that jumped in his breast as he asked himself: "Why was that revelation not given, first, to me?" For the notion, although so astonishing, was not strange. Rather it was familiar, like a thing known, put out of mind, recalled again. It fitted, it seemed to rise naturally from everything that he and his people believed and that he had imagined for himself during his youthful ponderings. For always he had thought that the soul came from some living thing, since only life gave life, and that every creature had a soul like man's, tree and rock and stream and beast; and always he had pictured his own little winged soul, which was a part of himself although small and separate from his body, flitting here and there in sleep and flying off in death, whither he had not known, and often he had

fancied that since it could be put by holy or by magic means in any place it might be set in the body of some living creature—his own choice had been a swan, he remembered. That it should do this of itself at death, that it should pass, when the body died, into another body, now seemed to him a truth of truths. His mind was caught. At that moment he put from him as crude barbaric dreams those other pictures he had had of an eternity of bliss, the happy, everlasting Getæ heaven.

"Your Pherecydes' revelation is from Thrace," he said, and in his own mind he did not lie. "All wisdom is of Orpheus." And his anger passed and he questioned his friend regarding this Pherecydes, native of an Ægean island, who loved the northern saint. Already before that day he had learnt that the greatness of Orpheus was known among the southern wise men, that the holiness which had been, so he had fancied, his own rarest dignity, his own rarest message, had been conveyed by others to Attica. But he was eager now to discover, to understand, and so he listened quietly, strolling beneath Athena's trees in the fairness of the morning, while his friend told him what he could of Pherecydes and of his teaching.

It was less than Polycles commonly told of such matters, for the philosopher was a new man, lately come to Athens, and the scholar had not yet examined his doctrines deeply. "He knows everything of all the gods," Polycles said. "He says that the world was made by the mating of Zeus, who is the essence of life, with the Earth Goddess. They were from the beginning, with Time, who fathered air and fire and water. And many gods sprang from these three." Besides his study of the gods and of the origin of the universe it seemed

that Pherecydes had studied astronomy and had made many curious experiments. But especially he had studied men's souls and had received certain divine revelations concerning them, which he communicated in the form of teaching and of mysteries, secret rites, like those that Eolon himself taught but newer and more strange. Already in Athens his followers had formed themselves into communities where the new wisdom was known and the new initiation conferred. And when Eolon heard this he asked his friend to take him quickly among the philosopher's disciples that he might learn more of their doctrines and presently, perhaps, become an initiate also. Polycles agreed very willingly, for he too was curious of the new faith, he said, and of its mysteries, which were different from any other earlier Greek mystery.

Eolon walked back through the city that day in great excitement. His mind dwelt upon his beloved Orpheus, the holiness that he had revered since boyhood in far-off Thrace and whose fame was spreading now so strangely. But above all he thought of the new revelation. He was so taken up with his questions—whence did the soul come before it was a tree, a beast, a man? Did it find a resting-place at last, or turn forever, like a fly crushed and sticking to a wagon wheel?—that he paid no heed to the streets about him or to what was passing in them. He did not look at the temples or their brightly coloured decorations, the gorgons that stuck out their tongues, rounded their hideous gaze that all other horrors should fly in terror of this greatest horror; the serpents that were half-men with scales of red and blue and green enamel eyes. He did not see the women who tripped about the

shrines, their faces as thickly painted as the walls themselves, white to disguise their sallow Mediterranean skins, red to give their lips richness, black or blue to make their eyelids languorous; or the athletes that came here also, bringing discs or jumping-stones or other objects that they used in games, that the goddess might put virtue into them.

They went through the market-place where there was a great to-do, for it was the market day and always at such times men shouted and quarrelled more vehemently than usual, crying their wares and disputing upon State matters. The countrymen brought their fruit and vegetables, led in their oxen and their sheep and goats. Fishermen spread their rushes on the ground; every manner of small merchant laid out his cloths and baskets, among jugglers and dicers who cried, "Look! Look!" and "Try if the gods love you!" and priests who moved here and there, selling charms and amulets, and musicians who played and sang, and children who darted between the legs of men and mules and asses, and flies that buzzed and settled, and dogs that ran tail down, stealing. And the followers of the three parties, the Plain, the Hill, the Shore, mixing with the crowd, argued, or stood in corners and preached their various doctrines. Praise of the Hill, abuse of its enemies, mingled with the disputing of the peddlers, this man crying that his neighbour's ass had made water on his fairest stuffs, another that a loutish farmer had allowed his ox to crush his finest pottery. "Pisistratus is good," said one. "He loves Attica. He would have us all alike, merchant and craftsman, townsman and yokel, rich and poor. Athena loves him. And he won us back Nisæa"; to which an opponent retorted that Pisistratus

was a foxy, smooth-tongued intriguer who sought only to usurp the tyranny. In a further place a man of the Shore spoke of the virtues of his leader Megacles; whereupon a group of Hillsmen, standing before him, clapped their hands to their privates and shouted: "The Evil Eye! Beware the blood of Cylon!" Clamour filled the air, sharp cries and hoots and laughter, when suddenly some one called out: "An omen!" A bird, flying high in the hot heavens, passed, and silence fell like death upon the upturned, staring faces of the people.

"Something will happen soon," said Polycles. "That was surely an eagle. And Pisistratus grows in popularity." Eolon did not answer. Before his mind's eye he saw a round turning cage such as men sometimes put mice in. Within it his soul ran from rung to rung. Death followed life, life followed death; the cage turned and the beast ran on. Yet it remained ever in the same place and was a prisoner.

CHAPTER IV

For many days after that Eolon thought of nothing but the new faith, the new revelation that had been given to him. At the inn he had no time to speak with his humble friend Alexander or to continue the instruction that he had lately started to give to him and to certain other of the Ikarian mountaineers in the mysteries of Dionysos and the holiness of the god's servant Orpheus. His mission, his ambitions were forgotten. At night he lay alone and chaste, playing on his lyre; and the mother of Polycles wept and sent him gifts and messages. As for the agitation that was in Athens at that time, he heeded it no more than if the city had been a sea, and he and his thoughts and the men who ministered to them alone on a quiet island in the midst of it.

The noise of its waves reached him. "Great news! Great news!" his stout landlord cried to him one evening. "Crime and terror! Yet our Pisistratus grows in power!" And seizing Eolon by the two fronts of his cloak he proceeded to tell him a long tale of how, in the market-place that day, Pisistratus had rushed suddenly among the people, his clothes disarrayed, his legs and arms all bloodied and the servants and the mules that were with him wounded and bleeding also, having been set upon by brigands as he was riding peacefully upon the road to Marathon. The indignation of the people had been so great that at once, when Pisistratus had appealed to them to succour him, their only friend and champion, they had

run with him to the Public Assembly and voted him a guard, armed with stout clubs, to save him in future from such abominable onslaughts. "Solon was there," the landlord said. "They say he stamped his stick and shook his fist and shouted against our Pisistratus, the hoary catamite. Even then, with the man he had loved before him—all cut about and dripping!" At this another Hillsman who was standing by, winked an eye at Eolon. "They did it with the mules' blood," he said. "It was a stratagem;" whereupon the landlord let go of Eolon to turn and scold the other for his nonsense or his blabbing. But Eolon scarcely heard them.

He spent all his time with the men to whom Polycles had led him, the followers of Pherecydes and of the new doctrine of rebirth. They were his sole companions, and the little quiet rooms where they chose to congregate his sole real home. For though they mixed with other men, it was ever in places where there was no noise, no babble of politics or gossip. They went very quietly, which was the first thing that had astonished Eolon after he had learnt that they professed themselves followers in truth of the Thracian Orpheus, hence of the wild, the rapturous Dionysos. But everything he saw and heard among them, while it answered many of his questions, amazed and disturbed him. The very company in which they moved was strange, being of every land, Greeks in loose robes, Lydians in robes that were long and narrow, Egyptians in white linen, and even Thracians, notably an old man of the far-northern Bessi tribe, out of Mount Hæmus, where men wore tails like horses it was said, and a youth from the land of the Cicones, Orpheus' birthplace. These two were newcomers. It

seemed that it was Mycon who had encouraged them, during his journey through Thrace, to visit Athens. And when Eolon heard this he was considerably mortified and his vision of his patron's shrewd eyes and sturdy limbs darkened until it was almost as black as treachery.

But chiefly it was the speech of these men that astonished him. At first he did not receive instruction directly, as he had been giving it to Alexander, but in the form of tales and conversation. His usual companion was a grave, bearded man, and at his earliest visits Eolon regretted this. There was one among the followers of Pherecydes who was a very lovely youth. Eolon would have preferred to receive the new mystic truths from him. And sometimes, looking across the room, his mind was distracted by the thought of this loveliness and of the strange, god-like power that beauty had, especially in Greece where the people were not commonly beautiful.

But soon he was all absorbed by the greater strangeness of his companion's stories. The first were of Orpheus, his beloved master, and while some were familiar to him, some were altogether new. There was one that seemed the favourite. It told how the saint had wed a woman named Eurydice who had died, bitten of a serpent, and how the saint had gone in search of her into the underworld where she dwelt with the shades and with the dread queen whom the Greeks called Persephone but whom these men called by the name that Eolon knew, which was Despoina, Mistress. Alive, Orpheus had stood in the kingdom of the dead; and the tale went on to say how he had charmed its Mistress with his music and so had rescued Eurydice and led her back to earth, but had lost her

again because he had turned his head and looked at his beloved when Persephone forbade. This was the mystic history of Orpheus, the bearded man said, true of itself and concealing many other hidden truths. And though Eolon was as yet bewildered, he nodded his head. He knew that the snake was death and that no man must look back at a corpse or at a grave; and in his own cult of Dionysos there were rites of seeking and discovering in the hour when the god was said to have been lost and the women went to find and bring him back again.

After Eurydice's vanishing, the bearded man went on, Orpheus had known no more of woman. He had given himself to fasting and purification and a holy life. And he had made sacred rites that would save men from the weary cycle of death and rebirth—which was the wisdom that Eolon sought, so that he was glad to hear this—and that would save them also from eternal punishment in the underworld—which was a thing that Eolon had never heard of and that filled him, now, with terror. The rites of Pherecydes, called Orphic, the bearded man said, were the whole truth of life and death. They taught men how to live; they gave him the means whereby, in this world and the next, his soul might possess the friendship of the dread underworld goddess. Safe in her love, she would not curse him when he came at last, like Orpheus, into Hell, but would bless him and make him like unto the gods that lived forever. And this again Eolon understood, for his rites also made him the lover of Dionysos, joined him forever with his god.

The new disciples of Orpheus were sad, Eolon thought, even as he had been sad when as a boy he had lain and wept for love of the goddess and later

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when he had thought that the world was full of evil and of suffering. These early moods returned to him as he listened, and he nodded again when his companion said that life was all sorrow and impurity. They believed that men were born again and yet again, even as their astronomy bade them know that the stars, after their revolutions, returned to their first stations in the heavens. And they believed that life was very evil. And here the bearded man told Eolon another tale that explained how this evil came to be, not only about man but in him, part of his very bones and blood.

The tale was of Dionysos. It said that the mystic god was son of Zeus, the high principle of life, ruler of the sky and of the rain and of the thunderbolt; and that one day, while the infant Dionysos was playing, a band of giants, monstrous sons of Earth, approached the god, and having beguiled his guardians and attendants, set upon him and killed and ate him. The deed was done. God himself could not undo it. But Zeus, in vengeance, flung his thundershaft upon the giants. So they died and were consumed, and from their ashes men were fashioned, bodies of slime that yet contained, concealed within them, the holiness that had been in the giants' bellies, fragments of the flame, the child Dionysos. And so it was, the bearded man added, that although Zeus had made the world in the first place, by mating with the Earth goddess, men had come into it—with evil and suffering—rather through the body of the Son Dionysos in his sad mingling with the dark sons of Earth.

This story surprised Eolon extremely. Although he, too, was accustomed to eat his god, he could not at first understand the tale and might have rejected it if he had not been told that it came from Crete, home

of all mysteries and truths. For even now, in Crete, the child that Sophia and her dancers had devoured was not forgotten. The tale survived of an infant god, born in the winter-time in a cave while the earth groaned and the fire, the sun, leaped from the mountain. Some Greeks called him Zeus and some Dionysos. And the rites lingered also. The holy men who had been the powers of the day and of the night, still danced and fought about the child. But now, in place of a child, they devoured a bull, the sacred beast of Crete and Thrace and many other lands. The killing and rending of a human being had come to seem to them barbaric, ugly, and so they said that the ancient men who had done these things were not the god's worshippers, but monsters and his direst enemies.

As for Dionysos, his heart, his soul, had been preserved in a chest, and he rose again and flourished as the son of Zeus. And as Eolon grew in knowledge and in the confidence of his teachers, he came to understand the truths of the tale and why the disciples of Pherecydes said that they too, like Dionysos, would live presently in the peace of God. For not only did the Orphic rites give the friendship of the Mistress, the underworld Mother, they gave also, after the manner of Eolon's rites but more safely, more surely, identity with the Son. By them man, unequally compounded of the earth's foulness and heaven's divine spark, could rid himself of that original foulness and become all divine godhead, all Dionysos. By them he could escape from suffering, as much as possible in this world and altogether in that other world to which his soul went at his last death and where terrible punishments awaited the unworthy.

And here again Eolon trembled and here again, if

he had dared, he would have doubted. For while the Hell that his companion described in the course of many other stories and explanations was terrible indeed, the way of purification was long and arduous. The rites themselves were but the first step on the hard road. If he would escape from the wheel of life and death and from the pains of Hell man must live forever pure, avoiding evil in the forms that Eolon knew, such as the touch of women in childbirth and the touch of corpses, and in forms that were unknown to him, such as the touch of dead carcasses in food and clothing. For these men wore linen only, and after the holy sacrifice, which was a bloody sacrifice, they ate no death-tainted flesh but always the gentle foods that Dionysos, the Son of wine and fruits, and Demeter the corn-giver provided. But most particularly, the bearded man insisted, men must avoid evil of another new, strange, dim sort that Eolon's mind boggled at, an evil that was in themselves, in their own hearts and actions. "It must never be forgotten," his teacher said, "that the vileness of the earth is in us. Our thoughts, our passions may be muddied with it. It must be the business of our whole lives to rid ourselves of that foul birthright."

"Must I not fight? Not hate? Not love?" Eolon asked, and the other answered: "You must not kill." Killing, he said, was the uttermost evil, altogether forbidden. Indeed all violence and suffering were of Hell; each earthy act kept men the longer in the unhappy, earth-bound circle of rebirth and dying. But his grave eyes looked kindly on his pupil, so that Eolon knew that what he had said displayed understanding, a dawning of the Orphic wisdom. And in fact that day, as he went from the house, his teacher

whispered: "Come to-morrow. The feast will be spread. The crown ready."

So Eolon, the next night, went to the appointed place, which was a little house on the outskirts of Athens. From its roof the sky could be seen in its length and breadth: there were no higher houses round about; and in its courtyard was a deep cellar. Eolon had fasted. For several days before that, hoping that the hour of his consecration was drawing near, he had abstained from meat flesh and from pomegranates and certain fish and all the other foods that the most ancient rites and his new teachers held to be at once holy and dangerous. With him he brought a living kid, the sacrifice, Eriphos-Dionysos. He went alone. Although Polycles had also begun to receive the mystic teaching, he had ceased almost immediately. He was too busy, he said, upon the affairs of Pisistratus, his master, to consider his own soul now; for it seemed that after Pisistratus had assembled his guard of club-bearers, which he had indeed obtained from the people by fraud, by pretending to be wounded and in danger, he had started many new gatherings and plottings.

Eolon went in great anxiety of spirit. The strange, new notion of sin, which he saw as an impurity as real as the impurity of illness, as tangible as the dirt of the streets or of his own body, reigned terribly above all his other notions. The lately disclosed vision of Hell and of its horrid punishments was before him; and as he passed into the little house he pressed the kid that he carried to his bosom. Presently it would be slain, and through it, with it, he would die and live again in the eternal life of Dionysos. For he went in great

hope also and for that time in great determination. Embracing the kid, he remembered that after this night and its last feast he would never again eat flesh but would live in amity with all the beasts, whose souls were the souls of dead men or of men unborn. And he remembered that he had done this in a manner when he was a little child, watching the hares and foxes, singing to the cattle in the mountains of Thrace.

He came into the courtyard of the house, and there his teacher awaited him, dressed in white linen like an Egyptian. He did not speak, but kissed Eolon on the lips to mark his welcome into the community and took him by the hand and led him down a dark stair into the cellar. And here for a moment Eolon hesitated, confused by the darkness and by the flicker of torches that was in the room. But soon his eyes became accustomed and he saw a number of men, dressed in white as his guide was dressed, and one in particular, who stood very erect and solemn in the dimness and the silence. And Eolon knew that this man was the priest, the leader of the rites, and that the men about him were, in their most mystic meaning, the attendants of the god Dionysos, his ministers and holy dancers. The priest held a wand. Behind him, painted on the wall, was a great tree, and beside him was a little chest that held the most sacred objects. About his feet serpents crawled. Here and there were pots and baskets containing the cakes of plenty and the fruit and grain of increase; and Eolon saw many other things that were familiar and yet surprising, although he was aware that the rites of Orpheus were very ancient rites informed with new spiritual meanings, even as the Orphic gods were very ancient gods seen less in their man-like shapes than as potencies.

invisible, spiritual powers. Which was a thought so old that Eolon had never heard of it. In the centre of the room was a mound of earth, sign of the most ancient burials, the navel of the world, the birthplace, the grave, the Mountain. Eolon took the kid that he carried and laid it, bound, upon this altar.

Now was the time of holiest purification. Still silently the attendants stripped Eolon, and one put a crown of fresh leaves upon his head, symbol of the king and of the consecrated victim; and the two torches that were the flames of the Mother Mountain were thrust into his hands. And so he stood naked while others of the men flung at him fragments of white chalk, still held to be a very holy substance, expulsive of evil, nourishing of good, and smeared him with mud and washed him with water and beat him with boughs, fruitful branches, until he bled and wept, and swung about him pots of burning herbs whose smoke and smell enveloped Eolon. Meanwhile others of the god's servants moved in a solemn dance. Each held some sacred symbol, this one a palm, that one a phallus, another a bull-roarer, another a snake, another the holy harvest fan with which women winnowed grain, in which infants were cradled or fruit carried. Before Eolon a great bronze wheel hung, revolving slowly, the very wheel of life and death. And it, too, was for purification, for bronze was of itself a holy metal and by its movement it drew good spirits from the air and cast evil spirits out. Eolon looked at the wheel, and his soul was filled with horror of that eternal turning. He looked at the earthen altar, and the chill of death came on him.

But the attendants had fulfilled their cleansing. The kid was slain, and Eolon plucked out the heart,

and he and the attendants and the priest ate of the flesh, sharing reverently in the meal. And Eolon daubed the blood upon his face and hands, and one of the men held the mystic harvest fan above his head while another gave him a draught that was of water and meal mixed with mint, a charm no longer of childbirth and increase but of spiritual fruitfulness. The foulness of the earth and death and evil had been smeared on him and taken off again; with the kid he had died. But now, by its life, which he had taken into his own belly, his own soul, he lived again. Now he was washed in milk to show he was a kid reborn and happy in its mother's love. A white robe was brought and put upon him; a veil was laid over his face and head. A stool was set before the altar, and he, still closely veiled, was seated on it, and serpents were twined about his neck as a sign that he was become one with his god, the snake Dionysos, and certain objects were put into his hands that were, the priest whispered, the playthings of the holy child whom, in Crete, the sons of Earth had killed and eaten.

Then the priest lifted the chest and opened it and Eolon took from it the most sacred object, the heart, the soul of Dionysos, which had been saved from the giants' devouring. It was in the form of a little serpent made of gold, and he passed it through the bosom of his dress. This was the holiest act, the rite of marriage with the god and the rite of the god's birth. By it Eolon was made a woman and the bride of Zeus the Father. Yet he was not only the goddess-bride, possessed by her lover, he was himself the god, the golden serpent, and by this act he possessed the Queen who was Hell's Despoina and who was also the woman Earth; for Eolon's marriage was not only his own

but that of Zeus and the Earth, the primordial mating. And being a serpent, the underworld Dionysos, Son of the Mother, he was a child as well, three persons.

While Eolon performed this holy act, the attendants pursued their dance, describing by their movements the substance of the rite, the creation of the world and the fight between the forces of the day and of the night, now held to be the good guardians and the evil enemies of the infant god, who in this mystery was no longer kid but bull, since the story and the rite were Cretan; and lastly the rebirth of Dionysos in the form of a little snake. From time to time they murmured words, the god's names, Father and Bride, infant and mystery, lion of fire, bull of life, snake of death, and many others.

So to Eolon the hidden truths appeared, the mystic origin whereby the god was Father, Son and Mother in one flesh, self-begetting, self-renewing, and the final truth that issued out of it, which was that the Bull Dionysos, who was of life, lived again in the Death-snake his child, was one with the child: that death made life, life death. And these truths the priest, after the dance and the song were over, gave to Eolon, raising his hand in exhortation. "The Bull is Father of the Snake," he said. "The Snake is Father of the Bull."

After that the priest spoke further words, and Eolon strained his ears to hear and to remember. For these were the words that he must utter presently in another very holy moment, and that he must utter again in that supreme moment when his soul went down to Hell and stood before the Guardians by the house of Despoina. They were the words that proclaimed his worth, the right that he had obtained, by virtue of

these most efficacious ceremonies, to enter the House and to drink of the waters of eternal memory. The priest, speaking in Eolon's name, chanted the words, and the dancers answered. They confessed Eolon's birth as child of earth and heaven and his rebirth now as a child, as lover of the gods, in the death of the victim and the purifications that he had undergone and his participation in the holy act of marriage; they avowed him rid of the foulness of the earth, free of the weary wheel of death and rebirth, athirst for the waters of eternal memory and joyfulness. "I am pure!" cried the priest in a loud voice, and more quietly the attendants answered, "I have fled evil. I have found good;" and again the priest called out, "I am pure. I thirst. Give me to drink;" whereupon one of the men brought him a cup, and he grasped it in his right hand and said: "Let there be silence."

Eolon sat quietly, reverently. He was not very much afraid. He felt the serpents move a little on his shoulders, and their touch was friendly. The sense that he was become Dionysos, not in fleshly ecstasy but in a new spiritual peace, possessed him. So he sat; and in the darkness and the quiet a vision came before his eyes. It seemed that he was walking in a meadow filled with flowers. A house was in the meadow, and two springs, lakes of clear water. He knew that one was Lethe, dark forgetfulness; a cypress that was not black but white, strangest and loveliest of trees, stood by it. But he knew that it was for the other spring, for the waters of the soul, of Memory, that he thirsted as he had never before thirsted for anything, love or wildness or music. He went towards it, and as he drew near two white forms rose up, which were the forms of Despoina's watchers,

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and questioned him, and he said to them everything that the priest had said in his chanting. But whether he spoke the words aloud or in the secret of his heart he did not know, for now, suddenly, he was filled with terror. The silence about him had grown threatening; the dark was an utter blackness in which he could no longer see the dim shapes of the Watchers. And the door of the house was opening.

And then, with a great crash, the symbols sounded, the summons to the goddess; a noise as of thunder went through the air, and a voice was heard, which was the priest's voice, crying: "Appear! Appear! Appear!" And Eolon, swooning screamed, out, "I thirst!" But the priest put the cup that he held to Eolon's lips, and he drank the water and revived. The veil was taken from his head, and the priest said: "Happy and blessed one, you are no longer man but god immortal." And he took him by the hand and led him out of the cellar, up the stair and up again to the roof of the house where he left him with the open sky, which was his father.

CHAPTER V

Eolon lived very soberly after his initiation into the mysteries of Orpheus. More closely even than before he hid within his room, eating fruit and bread, drinking water only, for he feared that wine would turn his soul towards feasting. And if a man called to him from the courtyard or the street to come and sup and talk and sing his poems, he shut his ears. He had done, he told himself, with light words and laughter. As for his mistress, it scarcely came into his mind to visit her. A strange and very terrible thought had occurred to him, which was that if the earth were female and the earth were foul, then there was foulness in woman and in the touch of her. He would not go about the city lest the sight of the statues and of the glancing, painted girls should bring him to temptation.

In the quiet of his room he resumed the instruction of Alexander and of the little group of friends that Alexander had brought to him. His heart aflame with his new faith, he tried to add to the teaching that he had started to give to them those other, greater teachings that he had received. But before he had well begun to speak of life's impurity and sadness he stopped. He dared not say these things, he thought—not yet, not to these ignorant men to whom he had promised an immediate, joyful union with the god, an ecstasy more exquisite than wine's. And though he spoke of certain lesser, simpler notions and though they accepted them, they would not accept one that was to Eolon the very seed of spiritual growth—the

notion that although the gods were incarnate at times in visible shapes, they were not in their essence bulls or goats or snakes or even men and women but formless, immaterial powers. At the first word of this his hearers gaped, their brows frowned; and seeing their bewilderment Eolon went no further. Once again he preached of the life that the Bull Dionysos conferred, the love with which the Snake Dionysos enfolded his brides. Thus to turn aside from his new path, thus to glance back at earlier happier moods put a sadness in his heart as of one who looks again upon his childhood, his home, knowing that they were beloved, knowing that they are altogether lost.

The further he went with his teaching the more this sadness darkened him. He could not say why this was so, but his teaching of his friend Alexander was especially painful. Alexander was still his aptest, most eager pupil. He came each night, and an increasing fire burned in his eyes, often a trembling took him as he listened to Eolon. Now dreams visited him, and he told them to Eolon, and Eolon interpreted their hidden meaning, which was always of a holy nature. "I dreamt of a stream," said Alexander. "I was a child and fishing in it." "Water is of Dionysos," Eolon answered. "He lives in the lakes and in the rivers and in the moisture of trees and of every growing thing. He is the life of water and of every other life. And water is for purification." "I dreamt of a burning log," said Alexander, "that my mother put into the fire." And again Eolon answered, "All flames are of the fire of Dionysos, which is a lion. And lions belong also to the Mother. They go beside her when the torches are raised up the mountains." Presently Alexander said that, not in sleep but while he went

about his ordinary business, a taste of salt had come into his mouth. And Eolon said, "That is the salt of purity and wisdom. You are blessed, Alexander." But still his heart was heavy. These truths that he taught were not the only truths; the passion that he awakened, directed in his friend, was not the highest passion.

A night came when Alexander was seized with a peculiar exaltation. His eyes looked no longer at Eolon or at the room about him, but into some invisible light that was so brilliant their own light was dulled with staring at it. In a little while, as Eolon spoke on of Dionysos the life-giver, Alexander fell to trembling violently; his hands, which Eolon held, grew cold; he began to move in a particular way upon the bed and to call out in a voice that was foreign to him. At last, with a loud cry, "I see him!" he started to his feet, took a step forward and dropped, lying as though dead. And Eolon understood that for his friend the hour had come, as it did sometimes without especial purifications or especial summoning, the dread hour of the god's manifestation. So Eolon did those things that were necessary for him to do to protect himself and Alexander—for every holy presence was as full of danger as of virtue. And when the dreamer wakened he questioned him. Such was the custom; every vision of the god was precious and every one might be a little different from the last. And Alexander said: "I saw a great light. In the midst of it there was a man, horned and riding on a bull. In one hand he carried vine-branches and in the other a golden wine-cup. Lions walked beside him. About his head were serpents. He loved me." And Eolon embraced his friend and said: "You have no

further need of me, Dionysos himself has chosen you." But after Alexander had left him, his eyes still dazed with wonder and with gladness, the melancholy that was in Eolon rose up until there was no room in him for any other feeling. For he knew, then, that his heart had taken an irremediable decision. In the hour of Alexander's vision, which was his own hour of triumph, promising success and wealth and honours, it had been said to him that he must cease to seek these glories, he must labour no further to become a famous priest of the Thracian Dionysos, who was no longer his only true god.

He was so unhappy that he snatched up his cloak and ran out of the inn. He found the house he sought and gave the signal, and stumbling after the startled, smiling slave-girl, came into the room where his mistress lay. She ran to him, laughing and weeping for joy at his return. But he did not answer her. He would not eat or drink. He flung himself upon her breast, buried his face in her shoulder. "Father! Father!" he cried within him, and did not know if it were to his flesh's father that he prayed or to the sky-spirit who was the father of his soul. Never, he thought, would he sway multitudes, never lead them, singing, to a vast temple where he would be greater than a king. And he would never again run with his companions over the mountains, never again share the common feast that was the body of Dionysos, the common ecstasy that made all god's servants one. His life was turned from that open splendid road to a narrow path that he must tread alone, pursuing a solitary salvation. All night long he lay chaste, weeping.

The next night he returned and loved his mistress.

But now it seemed that he hated her; her face and body were intolerable to him, so that it was as though he committed murder.

He left her at once and furiously. His mind was empty. He was scarcely aware of what he felt and not at all of why he felt it. As he walked through the streets he noticed an unusual agitation. In place of silence and blackness there was a hurrying to and fro of men and torches; every now and then there were shouts, as of rejoicing. And it came back to him that, although he had not heeded them, he had heard similar sounds earlier in the day. In the tavern to which he went, still unthinkingly, he soon learnt the reason of the commotion. It was that Pisistratus and his guard of club-bearers, lately grown from a few score to many hundreds, had gone to the city's citadel, and while the leaders of the Plain retired to their castles and their corn-fields, and the leaders of the Shore took ship and sailed altogether away, they had seized the ancient fortress and proclaimed Pisistratus tyrant.

Because he could not bear to be alone, because he feared the thought that he had sinned, since he had again loved a woman and women maybe were evil, Eolon drank freely with the Hillsmen that night and talked to them and listened to their talk. The greatest number were loud in their rejoicing. Their party had conquered; their leader had become supreme leader of the land. "Now we shall have peace," the stout landlord cried, "and good trade, and many visitors!" Others, it seemed, exulted chiefly in the thought that their master was master indeed, having power over every other man. And yet others said: "Well, maybe it is best. Pisistratus will make a good ruler. He is

just. He loves Athens;" as who would say: "If we must have tyrants, better he than any other," which astonished Eolon. He had heard much in these months of Athens' hatred of a single head, of her love for her republic. But being himself from a land of kings he had little sympathy for these emotions. Many, being full of wine, could do no more than shout: "Long live Pisistratus! Life, health, strength to him!" drowning the noise of lesser voices and scraping feet and knocked wine-cups. But beside Eolon there was one who shook his head. "Liberty!" he sighed. "Beloved, cherished. . . ." "Who is he?" Eolon asked, and was told that the man had been one of Pisistratus' hottest fighters.

In the days that followed, everything that Eolon had desired of worldly growth and honour was offered to him. Pisistratus was in power. At once, even while the builders were busy on the citadel, raising the ancient ruined palace of the kings to make a stronghold for him, he started on the hundred other plans of change, reform, improvement that he had made for Athens. And Mycon sent for Eolon and told him that among these plans of Pisistratus was the resolve, indeed, to exalt Dionysos, the god of his Ikarian followers, above all other gods save Athena. The tyrants of Corinth and Sicyon had done something of the same work. In their lands the rustic god of wine was clothed in new mystery, crowned with new wisdom, so that rich and poor, learned and simple, loved him equally. But Pisistratus, Mycon said, would outdo his rivals in this and every other way. From all sides the greatness of Dionysos would be set before the people. An ancient wooden image of the wine-god, which was in a town on the neighbouring

Boetian border, was to be brought to Athens. Fine new shrines and sanctuaries were to be built; the ancient rustic festivals at which the peasants danced and sang and sacrificed and feasted, revelling with the vine-god, the fruitful son, were to be transformed into great public ceremonies with better songs and better dances, lovelier music, with games and poems and prize-givings, which all the citizens would attend, noble and artisan, merchant and sailor and miner and farmer. There would be a temple for the mysteries.

And in this temple Eolon, if he wished, would be high priest. Here he would celebrate the god's secret rites and orgies; here he would be chief. But if he chose, Mycon went on, he could take his share also in the changes that Pisistratus was planning in the public worship. "It is our master's wish," he said, "that the people should be instructed in religious things. So they will be happy and of one mind. Nothing binds men together so well as a common faith and common, holy rejoicings." With Dionysos, perhaps even before Dionysos, Athena was to be glorified, the Goddess of the city, the virgin for whom Pisistratus had so great a personal devotion. There were many other matters of a more practical sort to be considered. "Athens lacks water," said Mycon. "Men cannot think of holy matters while their throats are parched." But besides the great new aqueduct and fountain that Pisistratus was giving to the town, he was building, now at once, in place of the old, a new house for Athena, next to his own on the rock citadel. Her worship, her festivals especially were to become more splendid than any known in Greece. Under Pisistratus' own direction a priestly council was being

formed, to order them and all other public religious practices. And Eolon would be welcome on that council too, Mycon said.

But Eolon refused. Already he had given up his Thracian cloak. He stood before his patron, not indeed in the white linen of the Orphic sect but in the ordinary dress of an Athenian citizen. He had listened carefully to Mycon's words; he was curious of the excellencies offered him. But he would not have them. He shook his head. And when Mycon questioned him, asking his reasons for this odd change of heart, he answered only: "A new truth has come to me. My life is given to another wisdom." He could not explain clearly, even to himself, why his new faith, which was in many ways so like his old, having the same symbols, the same gods, was yet, to him, so different that the two could not be made to live together. Dimly he saw that other men, men like Polycles, would perhaps, in a manner, join them. He knew that such double growths were frequent. He himself, when he had proposed to add the mystic lore of his own land to the worship of the Attic wine-god, had pictured just such a grafting. But the way of the new Orpheus, which was sad, could not be the way of the wild, the passionate Bull Son. Or he at all events could not make it so. And when Mycon again pressed him, saying: "All truths are reconcilable, else they are not true! If you are clever, if you are careful, you will lead the people to your new wisdom also." He shook his head more vigorously than before. Nothing, he swore inwardly, would make him preach the faith of Dionysos and mix with it such morsels of a sadder, darker truth, as his hearers might find palatable. As he had done with Alexander! He would not do it, he repeated, and as

the words passed through his mind, a hot mist seemed to rise up and fill him. He flushed angrily. "No," he said. "No." And Mycon, shrugging his shoulders, dismissed him.

So it happened that in the liveliness and bustle of thoughts and words and actions that Pisistratus brought to Athens with his tyranny Eolon had no part. He stood aside and watched his friends, his rivals, rise above him. The new shrine where the wooden Boetian image of Dionysos was set up was given to Alexander; in the temple of the mysteries the old Thracian priest whom Eolon had seen among the followers of Pherecydes, ruled. With him were his "horses," which was the name he gave to his attendants, the horsemen followers of the god. In certain other places the god's dancers were called goats, goat-men, but mostly they were women, the wild, nursing nymphs of Dionysos.

The only work that Eolon would undertake was in the library of books that Pisistratus was assembling. Here the tyrant's scholars were engaged, collecting, compiling. Among their duties was a new and important work, the writing of the tales of Homer. The tales had been told, sung in a thousand shapes; hitherto they had not been set down and made into a book. And Pisistratus had urged Polycles and his scribes to do this work, so that at every public recitation, in the assemblies of the priests and of the people, in the homes and schools of children, all should hear and learn the same story. Eolon did not help his friend in this task. But there were other books for him to copy in fair script—oracles, hymns that were sung at the gods' festivals, lists of omens favourable and

unfavourable to man. And there were Thracian poems also, of which he made translations. Sometimes when he found a turn of phrase that sounded clumsy in the Attic tongue he altered it a little.

Although he had abandoned, for his new faith's sake, his hopes, his ambitions, Eolon did not follow the Orphic discipline very closely at that time. It was enough, he felt, that his deepest life should have been given to it. Once again, when the craving took him, he feasted, eating meat, which was forbidden, drinking wine, which was allowed but that he felt was very evil, it filled him with such a lust for laughter and warm living. Again he enjoyed love, though never with the mother of his friend, seldom with any woman. And always, after he had loved or revelled, he was stung with bitterness—a foretaste of Hell, he thought, so that for a little while he went chaste and fasting.

His first passion for Athens also returned to him. In those years he went about the city constantly, watching the building of the house that Pisistratus made for Athena, a temple one hundred feet long, ablaze with brilliant colour, and of the great fountain with its underground pipes and many mouths that brought the city water, and of all the tyrant's public works. New statues of smooth stone, cut out of Mount Pentelikon, were multiplying in the richer quarters. Eolon thought that he liked the old tufa figures better, the rude shapes whereon the paint was laid thick to hide the pitted surface.

He walked most often in the poorer places of the city. In the yards and fields where the young men exercised, preparing for the holy games, he stood for long hours, leaning against a fence with other onlookers,

watching the oiled and earth-smudged players run and skip and throw and box and wrestle in the din of shouted orders and the dust and heat. He spoke with grooms and smoothed the lathered flanks of racehorses. Standing before the kilns, in the quarter called the Potters', because the potters had gone there first of the artisans, he followed each movement of the squatting men as they drew out their cups and vases, shouting songs in praise of Hephæstus when the brightly-patterned glaze was smooth and even, cursing him when the fiends of cracking or of under-baking had spoilt the work. It made him smile to see the new pictures these men made of the new god Dionysos, his mother and his grapes, his wine-cups and monstrous, horse-tailed attendants.

Upon the little open shops a thousand images were painted. Again gorgons stuck out their tongues to scare away the spirits that broke pots or caused hammers to slip or otherwise disturbed men's business. And again the Maid Athena brooded, the ancient Motherly Maid who had been the Earth and wife to Hephæstus. About her were not lovely girls and handsome youths such as danced more plentifully than ever before Pisistratus' hundred-foot temple, but snakes and goats and bulls and fish and diving-birds and owls, every holy creature; besides huge eyes to outstare the Evil Eye, and male symbols that gave strength, and female symbols that gave wealth and prosperity, and scenes that brought luck or made men laugh or tremble. At times he tried to talk to the workmen of Orpheus and the ways of Hell, but once again their staring looks, at first astonished, then round with anger and with fear, stopped him. So he brought his lyre and played and sang his poems to them, which was an entertainment

that they enjoyed extremely. Returning again towards Polycles and the library, he breathed the smell of clay and leather, the warmth of melting metals, the sickliness of linen and raw wool and dyes, the freshness of new wood mingling with the familiar stench of food and oil and dirt. The sight of the half-naked men and women who worked and laughed and quarrelled in the noisy streets gave him greater pleasure now than the sight of dark-eyed tripping girls, or fair-headed patrician women, or courtesans whose hair was dyed yellow in imitation of the great ladies and who rode in fine litters also and who smiled at Eolon.

In the library he worked quietly beside his friend, transcribing the ancient hymns and oracles upon new skins, translating, sometimes composing poems of his own. For this work Pisistratus paid him in food and house-room and a little gold, which he added to the gold his father sent to him from time to time. And for the most part he continued to live quietly. After his initiation he had gone among the followers of Pherecydes, seeking comfort and fellowship. But none had become his close companion; the youth whose beauty had so stirred him he had never seen again. And when he had ceased to observe their laws, he had ceased his visits altogether.

Polycles remained his only friend. With time the scholar also had become an initiate of the new Orpheus. Although he did not wear the Orphic dress—a secret sect, he said, was best kept truly secret—he obeyed the Orphic rule; privately at least he professed the Orphic doctrines. He could talk as glibly as Eolon of the terrors of the other world, the need for purity in this. But his feeling towards his religion was very different

from Eolon's. His temperate complexion made the hardest discipline easy; his supple mind allowed him, as Eolon had in a manner foreseen, to adapt his new learning to every need. He was an Orphic, committed to the belief that life was evil, a thing of suffering that the soul must turn from. Yet he was a priest of the Olympians, a leader among the men whose creed was that man's life was all he had and so he had best be as happy in it as was consistent with his State duties. And when Eolon asked Polycles how he could fit these two together, say black, say white, he answered that in the darkest ignorance there was ever a spark of the divine truth, which was the one, universal truth. It was only, he said, by mixing with the darkness that he could brighten it; it was only by going with the people that he could guide them to the light.

For he also sought to bring Greece to the new faith. But not at once, not openly. The times were not yet ripe, he said; the Orphic hatred of life was foreign to the Hellene nature; the people must be led to it little by little. And Eolon, who had failed to convert one Athenian citizen, was enraged. Truth was truth, he cried out, and must be uttered clearly or not at all. Polycles was a hypocrite and a liar. And Polycles answered that such suddenness was foolish and that Eolon's head was harder than his own Thracian rocks, his lips unyielding as a mule's lips. The plan that he had formed for leading his fellow-men to Orpheus was precisely the plan that Eolon had so angrily rejected. Besides his great concern, which was the tales of Homer, the scholar was busy on all manner of religious works. He was a member of Pisistratus' priestly council; he helped to order dances and processions, to direct many

of the mystic rites. So now in certain of the festivals of the gods, in the ceremonies especially of Demeter and Persephone, he was preparing to set Orphic dances, Orphic symbols; into the orgies that he was composing for the new mystic Dionysos he introduced the notion that the giants, the sons of Earth who had devoured the holy child, were in fact the monsters most familiar to the people; they were the Titans out of Homer. Weary of argument, Eolon shook his head, bit his lip at this mole-hearted, insinuating way.

Yet after their quarrels they were friends again. Eolon could but love a man who praised his poems above every Attic poem; who liked his translations of the Thracian bards so well that he wished, he said, that he had written them himself. And Polycles valued Eolon's judgment equally. There came the day when his book of tales was finished, that book which Pisistratus proposed to make the holy book of every man in Attica. And Polycles must sing it to his friend. And Eolon, although the tales were of the Olympian gods whom he despised, implying beliefs that were become alien to him, must listen. His version of the tales of Homer was the one thing that lit a spark in the scholar's eye, that kindled his cold heart to passion.

And as his friend sang Eolon was warmed also. The recital was spread over many hours. Each night they met and each night Polycles recited, accompanying himself upon the lyre. Eolon had heard the stories many times before, but never before, he knew, had he heard them clothed in words that had such splendid music. Now his hands and his feet jerked with the fighters before Troy; he sighed with Priam and

rejoiced with Agamemnon; his bowels yearned for Patrocles and for Helen; he wept because the friend of Achilles died; he wept as sadly for the death of Hector. So he heard the Iliad; and at the end of it he kissed his friend, weeping again for joy and admiration.

Then Polycles took his lyre again and began to sing of Ulysses. And at first the same heat flushed Eolon. Again his arms ached as he swam, as he struggled and laboured with the crafty one; he laughed until he choked at the adventure of the sheep and the trick played upon Polyphemus; his eyes filled with tears as he pictured the music of the sirens. He heard of Nausicaa and of her boldness and her modesty; he heard of Circe. But now, as the tale proceeded, astonishment seized him; his eyes grew round as the potters' eyes had grown when he had spoken to them of the spirit's suffering and of eternal damnation. For the song that his friend sang was a new song. He told how Ulysses went to Hell, and behold this Hell was not the dim, ghostly Hell of the Olympian order but the awful Hell of Orpheus! Into this ancient song, composed by the greatest of all poets, this book that bards would carry to every Hellene land, that would be sung at every festival as well as in the schools and wherever men assembled, so that with time and by the power of its surpassing excellence it would become the book of books of all the Greeks, Polycles had put the wisdom that he had learned among the followers of Pherecydes!

Eolon did not know, then, which moved him more, his rage at what he felt to be a profanation of his holiest thoughts or his poet's indignation at such abominable cheating. Whichever it might be, the

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emotion stirred him so strongly that he sprang up and snatched the book from where it lay before Polycles and tore violently at its leather pages. At once Polycles flung himself also on the book. If his scream of horror had not brought a dozen servants rushing into the room Eolon might have destroyed it. Or he might have killed Polycles.

CHAPTER VI

THE next day Eolon took his store of money and left Athens. He did not care where he travelled so long as he went from the city of his disappointment and his rage. But in fact an impulse guided him, and the ship that he boarded at Phaleron set its huge sail, big as itself, turned its prow and the great staring eyes that were painted on it towards Crete. The sight of the waves soothed Eolon a little. If, as the island men declared, the sea was also a goddess, an Earth Mother, loveliest of them all, then she, he told himself, would be his choice—Aphrodite of the waters. Sitting alone in the ship's bows, he looked away from the herb-scented hills of Attica. He watched the dolphins play, the sea-birds fly, the mauve islands rise and fall on the horizon; he saw the grass-green sea go pale when thunder threatened, then change again to emerald as the sky cleared, to violet when at sunset the ship sailed into the little harbour bays. Each morning he heard with the same eagerness the cries and oaths of sailors, the groaning of ropes; each night the same ease covered his heart as the sail settled, rustling, upon the decks, as the anchor slipped, splashed and the ship rode at peace in the dark sea. So Eolon went to the land where Sophia had danced, where Minos, sire of the great dynasty of sailor kings, had reigned and fallen.

His first place of pilgrimage was the holy cave, high on Mount Dikte, that was the birthplace of the god whom the Greeks called Zeus or Dionysos. He went there at once—even before he visited the famous priests

and sanctuary of Ida—going on mule-back from the eastern town where he had landed, near to a bay where shoals of fish came of themselves in their season, miraculously, the people said. A native of the coast rode with him, a small dark man whose speech was scarcely intelligible to Eolon; in this eastern corner of the island the last remnants of the ancient Cretan race survived, speaking a jargon that recalled the ancient language, worshipping gods that were their own gods' bastards. Despite, or maybe because of the strangeness of his tongue, the tales that he told made Eolon shiver, grim stories of the beings that haunted Dikte, howling, beast-headed nymphs and bloody Mothers, snakes that stole and devoured children, and lions whose manes were fire. Going at last into the great cave, Eolon bowed reverently, possessed by a fear that was perhaps the presence of the god. Deep down were pools of water, and all about him were great stone columns, not made by man but hanging from the roof, and there were other smaller rocks, rounded like graves or like a woman's belly. Men had set up altars in the cave, hollowed to receive the blood; in a building not far off priests sold the materials of sacrifice, with axes to fell the victim or to leave as offerings. So Eolon killed a ram and afterwards stuck a small bronze axe into a crevice in the rocks, beside a thousand similar votive axes. And as he did so he said: "May all that is good dwell in God's heart for me with this axe. And may all that is evil leave me and dwell with it likewise."

Upon Mount Ida, whither he went next day, riding westward, Eolon found another cave. The priests who were said to be the wisest in the world, not excepting those of the Egyptians, lived about the mountain;

sanctuaries and shrines were there containing the most venerable images. The cave was indeed the most sacred of any, the priests said. To it King Minos had been wont to come in times past, to consult with the spirit who was his father, who was the god, who was Zeus. Here he received the laws that he gave to the people, even as the Jew Moses received the laws of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai; here he renewed, by contact with his heavenly father's powers, his own earthly sovereignty. And here men who sought true dreams and revelations slept, as the Sage Epimenides had done, and the gods visited them, sometimes in benign, smiling forms and sometimes in forms that were blood-stained and angry, for it was said that in the old days men had killed men at every holy season so that the ghosts of the murdered dead—men and women and children, dead priests, dead kings maybe—haunted all the holy places.

To Eolon's infinite surprise and gratification he discovered, living with the priests as their guest, the young man whom he had thought so beautiful, years before in Athens. His name was Pythagoras and he was an Ionian of the isle of Samos. And because they were both travellers and to meet far from home ever makes for brotherhood, Eolon fell upon the philosopher's neck. And Pythagoras kissed Eolon also and said that he remembered his face well and his disturbed, anxious looks as he listened to the first teachings of Pherecydes' followers. Soon they were close friends and spent long hours together, talking and wandering about the island. Crete was still very beautiful, although invaders had destroyed her finest cities and much shipbuilding had thinned her trees and poverty had sickened her best orchards and corn-fields.

In a valley by a river where there were many trees they walked and spoke of Orpheus and the soul's travels. And Eolon told Pythagoras everything of his life and of his troubles and how he feared sin yet fell into it constantly, lust and greed and hatred, and how he suffered and did not know which way to turn because of his remorse and his impurities. Pythagoras was grave and kindly. "You are too ardent, Eolon," he said. "And you are too fearful. Learn to be moderate. And when you fail in moderation do not despair utterly. Despair, by darkening and weakening the soul, leads ever to greater wickedness. Purity comes little by little, through watchfulness and care. And remember that for every sin there is riddance. When I first came to Crete my heart was heavy. But the priests of the Mother purified me with a most holy image, the sign of the Mother herself, a stone fallen from heaven. And afterwards I slept in the cave and many strange and glorious truths were given to me." And Eolon, wondering, asked: "Do you then love the Mother, the Earth, which is all evil?" And Pythagoras said: "You have taken the truths of Orpheus too exactly. The Mother cannot be evil, even though she exists also in the earth, which has bred evil things." "So women are not more foul than men," Eolon asked again, "although so afflicted, so earthy?" And Pythagoras smiled and said: "They are not evil of themselves, poor creatures. They are heirs with us to pain and foulness. It is the agitation of the soul that desire for them stirs in us that is evil, or breeds evil. You should marry, Eolon. When your body is at peace your soul will have greater freedom. And marriage brings many pleasant things. I have a little daughter whom I

like greatly. She is not beautiful but her soul is lively as a squirrel's."

After that Pythagoras told Eolon of himself and of the wisdom that he sought and that he was reaching by way of Pherecydes', his master's teaching, and the teaching of other wise men whom he had met on his travels in Asia and the islands, and in revelation, while he slept upon Mount Ida. But his studies were mostly of mathematics and astronomy, so that at first Eolon was not deeply interested. He could make little of the theory Pythagoras had concerning a central fire that was at the core of the universe: Hestia he called it, the Sacred Hearth. About this central flame, he said, heart of a rounded universe, an earth named Counter-earth revolved, and also the earth itself, the sun, the moon and all the planets and fixed stars; from it the earth received her light and warmth, not directly but by reflection from the sun. Of these last words Eolon understood something; his own earliest faith had bidden him believe that Dionysos, too, was a hidden fire.

Pythagoras was working also on another theory that puzzled Eolon extremely. It had to do with the speed at which the planets moved about the central flame and with their distance from it and with music. Each of the moving bodies gave forth a musical sound, Pythagoras declared. Those that went slowly and close to Hestia uttered a low note, and those that were further away and went faster uttered higher ones. Thus, by the dancing of the stars, the divine, heavenly octave was made, symbol and essence of all worldly harmony. "We live in this music," he said. "If we do not hear it, it is because there is no contrasting silence. We are like men dwelling in the noise of grass-

hoppers, which is unending, or in a forge where the smith's blows never cease. We are so accustomed to the music of the heavens that we do not notice it. But when we have come to our last death maybe our soul's ears will enjoy it throughout eternity." Eolon remembered that he too, long ago, had dreamed of a paradise that would be of lovely music.

He was amazed by his friend's learning. He might have felt envy of it and of the peace that Pythagoras enjoyed, working thus in the heart of strange remote matters that he found, it seemed, altogether satisfying. But looking at his companion, Eolon's dark thoughts passed. Pythagoras's beauty, his youthful gravity, his grace, were an enchantment to him. They had left the valley and had begun to climb the hillside. Beside a stream a young birch stood, curving its hip, Eolon thought, like a slim girl, like a boy resting. He pointed out the tree to Pythagoras. "Why do lovely things move us so?" he asked. And the philosopher answered: "The beauty of the flesh, of all visible things, is a reflection of the harmony that the stars make, dancing about Hestia."

While he dwelt on Mount Ida, Eolon underwent many new purifications. He did not perform the holiest ceremony, which in Crete was the eating of a bull; his initiation at Athens had been sufficient, the priests said. But, like Pythagoras, he went into the holy of holies and touched the stone that was the sign of the Mother, and he bathed in the most sacred waters and offered figs and grain before the most sacred images. And he, too, slept in the cave and dreamt. He saw a tall white shape, a woman's, he thought, that bent over him and kissed him. She vanished before he could see her face, but on awakening he was full of

joy, for this vision had not come to him since he was seven years old, and he was now close upon thirty. The priests, having questioned him, gave him the interpretation of his dream. It was that he was reborn a child again, pure and without sin, and that he must in future live cleanly and must not neglect the Mother.

From the conversation of Pythagoras and the priests Eolon received much curious instruction. His mind was lightened in many ways; his heart was reconciled to many things that had been bitter to him. The priests spoke of the child Dionysos, the bull, the snake, whose name in Crete was Zagreus, and of the stories that the common people told of its miraculous birth and death and survival, stories akin to those of the infant Zeus, who had been saved from the jaws and belly of his father Kronos, and of the Jewish Moses, who had been saved from the wrath of Pharaoh. The truths hidden in these tales were familiar to Eolon since his initiation. But of certain other matters of which the priests spoke, relating to the Mother and the Son and their loves and the Son's death, he was ignorant. These matters were known especially in the islands and among certain of the eastern mainland people, and were particularly strange. For in these lands it was often said that the Mother was not woman only but male and female in one flesh. So the Cyprians saw her sometimes as a bearded man, a Father-god, and in Lydia she was the two-fold monster Agdestis who had pursued the Son Attis with her desire and had herself caused his death. Hence a thousand other tales had arisen of mothers and step-mothers and princesses who had provoked young men, often bringing them to disaster.

All these tales of lustful women, the priests told Eolon, had come from the belief that in the beginning

there had been but one Earth, one divine being, whose body was of necessity of both natures. Of itself this being had brought forth a son; some said it was the moon who was thus firstborn. And having made him, with whom but this moon-child could the earth-mother mate? So it was thought that in the emptiness of Space the Son and the Mother had loved, the Lydian Attis and Agdestis, the Byblian Astarte and Adonis, many more, and from them the world had been created, generation by generation. Such, said the priests, were man's crude imaginings, invented to explain the metaphysic truth that the One had given birth to the Many. And maybe also, since every ancient tale had many origins, metaphysical, mystical, profane, the loves of youths and older women, of Œdipus and Jocasta, were memories of ancient customs, ancient rites: there were still singular ceremonies of the Son and of the Mother in Egypt and elsewhere. The evil of such unions had been recognised later and had served to obscure the stories still further and to make them terrible. And again there might be truth of a human sort in these stories, for children were inclined to love their mothers, though not necessarily in the Egyptian manner. In every case, the priests said, the tales must be taken as symbols, as echoes of the metaphysical reality. They must not be altogether despised and cast away, for it was needful that the people should believe, and no man could believe without some understanding. Which was what Polycles had said. From these men, from Pythagoras whom he loved, Eolon accepted this conclusion, the need of darkening the truth, although he had refused to accept it from Polycles.

But now his heart was on fire for other things. In

a little while Pythagoras returned to his home in Samos. And Eolon bade farewell to Mount Ida and took ship and left Crete. He did not, however, follow his new friend. Pythagoras had told him that love for a man might turn him from his clear destiny and duty, revealed in his dream, and which was to follow women and the Mother. And he did not go to Athens. After his departure there had been further disturbances in Attica. The leader of the Shore, Megacles, had made friends with the leader of the Plain. By combining together they had succeeded in expelling Pisistratus and his court. The news did not touch Eolon; his thoughts were far from Athens now, empty of hatred and of love. But having no wish to return, he was glad of this new excuse to stay away. He wanted to see the East, he told himself, the homes of the Son whose name was not Dionysos but Tammuz, Adonis, Attis.

He went first to Cyprus, where in a lovely land the loveliest Mother dwelt, Aphrodite, foam of the waters. At Paphos he saw her most holy image, which was a conical stone, and he saw other stone images shaped like women, and heard how in the ceremonies the king Pygmalion lay with one of these and how it moved and came to life in his arms, so that their marriage was a true heavenly marriage and brought benefit to the land. He went to Byblos in Phœnicia and heard the tales they told there of Aphrodite-Astarte and of her love for the beautiful young man Adonis, master of the river beside whose swift waters he had died and of the woods above them and of the beasts in the woods.

But though Eolon greatly liked the picture that this tale called up in his own mind, the beauty of the trees and the spring flowers, the weeping goddess, her whiteness stained, as the river was stained, with the

blood and the anemones of her lover's death, he found little trace of this sweetness and this melancholy in the people's worship. The men of Phœnicia were hard-faced, fierce-minded; their ceremonies were all bloodshed and fire, noises of bronze gongs and screaming victims, heat, lust and fury. And at that time it seemed that the gods required more fire, more of the blood of children, that they might have the more strength to save their people. On every side were threats and rumours of war. Tyre had a gloomy, brooding air; she still remembered the thirteen years' siege that she had suffered. All the towns were full of men who had fled from the Egyptian king as he burned and sacked, retreating before the Chaldæans of Babylon; the shops and markets were darkened by the sad, angry faces of Jews, exiles who dared not return to the city Nebuchadnezzar had taken, carrying thousands of its inhabitants into captivity. And now with Egypt weakening and Babylonia weakened, men spoke nervously, between mockery and dread, of the Persian people whose power was growing in the east. These people were so raw in mind, so barbaric, a priest told Eolon, that they taught their young men three things only: to ride a horse, to use a bow and to speak the truth. "Fools but very savage," the priest said. Though Eolon stared at all the women he met, at the sacred prostitutes of the temples, at the priestesses and at the wives and daughters of the merchants, he saw none who was fitted to represent, on earth and in his bed, the divinity who had visited him upon Mount Ida.

So instead of travelling further east to Babylon, as he had first intended, he turned his face northward and sailed to Lydia, the land where golden Cræsus reigned, careless alike, amidst his armies and his wealth, of

Egyptians and Babylonians and Persians. This was the truest home of the Mother. Here she dwelt with her lover Attis, supreme in the hearts of the people, more beloved even than the Father-spirit who was also worshipped in the great cities, or than the Moon, who in this country was not a goddess but a god. Landing at Smyrna, Eolon rode at once to Sipylus to pay homage to the huge image of her that was on the mountain, carved in the bare rock. And as he rode on towards Sardis, Crœsus' walled capital, he felt certain that the blessing of the goddess was upon him. The river valley lay hot and weary in the autumn sun. The meadows were empty of their purple saffron and their yellow corn; from the vineyards the last grapes had vanished. Along the roads troops of cavalry moved sluggishly, fine young men on fine strong horses, returning to their winter quarters in Sardis. The trees on the hillside were grey with dust. But the river shone, wrinkling in the mountain breeze, and Eolon went hopefully. In one place he saw a dove. The holy bird of Aphrodite, of the Mother goddess, sat on a plane tree, cleaning her wings; a ripple of pleasure ran over Eolon, soft as the ripples that the wind's fingers drew across the water. He stopped and watched lest she should pull a feather out, which would have been a bad omen. But no feather fell, and Eolon went on his way joyfully. The dove was a sure sign, he thought, that he would soon find the wife he sought. "Make her beautiful, Mother," he prayed, "and wise and loving."

And in Sardis the same sense of blessing and of promise upheld him. For himself, he did everything he should. The lodging that he chose was in the house of a Greek-speaking merchant, in the busiest part of

the town, before the river Pactolus. In the shop the landlord sold many sorts of woven and dyed wools, especially the carpets for which Sardis was famous; and his wife sold amulets and the images that were for offering in the temples, and toys, the dice and counters and knuckle-bones that the Lydians loved and which they said they had invented. Eolon's first purchase was an image of the Great Goddess, cut in Indian ivory. He set it in his room, beside his bed. He also bought a talisman, a thin tablet of gold inscribed with certain signs. He ate no meat, he drank his wine watered, he lived chaste. And as he walked through the bright streets, looking at the houses that were decked with carpets and every manner of rich stuff, at the palaces and great tiled temples and the women who moved languidly and the young soldiers who swaggered here and there, he wore his talisman carefully. If, in spite of it, his thoughts wandered from the path whereon his Cretan dream and the words of Pythagoras had sent him, he put a hand at once upon one of the great phalluses that stood at every corner and so exorcised the devil of temptation.

He was determined to keep his mind upon the Goddess. And in truth this was not a difficult matter in Sardis. For she was everywhere. She was the gentle mother whose songs soothed little children; she was the mourning woman who bore each year to her mountain grotto the slain body of her lover, a pine-tree or a youth tied upon a pine-tree; she was the terrible one who took the blood and manhood of her priests to feed herself or to feed the earth; she was the love spirit in whose temples the maidens offered up their hair, strength to her strength, or their virginities, the first-fruits of their bodies, giving the holy danger that

was in them to strangers, celebrating, after their fashion, the sacred marriage of the goddess and the god. And she was the monster of whom the priests of Ida had spoken, male and female in one flesh, from whom the world and all mankind had proceeded. In Eolon's room she was a little upright doll with large hips. He offered flowers before her daily, repeating the words that he had spoken to the dove.

And he had not been long in Sardis, October and the rain and cold had not yet come, when it seemed indeed that his prayer was answered. It was Eolon's habit, when he was tired of walking about the city, of talking with the temple priests, to rest in his landlord's shop. Here also his thoughts were turned towards amorous things, for as he sat among the carpets and the images, in the smell of burning perfumes, his hostess would entertain him with wine and sweetmeats and with tales of the Goddess and of women and dead queens and love. He had told her of his preoccupation. And it was here that he saw one day, going from the shop as he passed in, a girl so lovely that his heart jumped and a voice cried within him, or so he fancied: "Behold my daughter! Behold my dove!"

The girl was so beautiful that she looked wise. Eolon met her glance for but a moment. Walking beside a fat old woman who was, he supposed, her mother, she slipped by, drawing her veil over her head, and vanished in the crowd that moved all day, back and forth, before the river. But Eolon ran to his hostess and questioned her hotly. And when he heard her answers and the answers of her husband he was overjoyed. For they knew the girl well; they could bring her to Eolon whenever he wished, they said. She was in fact, the landlord's niece, the only child of

his widowed sister, who was priestess of a little sanctuary up in the hills. Her name was Myloë. And though Eolon might have preferred a richer wife, the knowledge that this girl, although so lovely, was unmarried and a virgin, overshadowed all else. It had often come into his mind that he would like a woman who was altogether chaste, after the Athenian fashion. And this, because of their religious practices, was not a common thing among the Lydians. "Yes," said the landlord. "Her mother has kept her——." He paused and looked at Eolon. "She has kept her very precious," he said. "She will need a great price for such a jewel." "The goddess loves me!" cried Eolon.

Not very many days later all was settled. The merchant's wife, hurrying to and fro between her home and the hill cottage where the priestess dwelt, next to her temple, arranged the bride-price. It was the half of Eolon's store. And after it was paid, Eolon himself rode up into the hills and saw again the face that he had thought lovelier than that of any woman he had ever seen, or any image, or any man. And he was not disappointed. He found Myloë in her mother's garden, by a little stream that ran there and whose waters became holy in the sanctuary. Fir-trees were all about, but in the garden chestnuts grew and ash, making a dense shade. The girl blushed and hung her head as he drew near, but when he took her hand she smiled at him. He kissed her hair. It fell about her neck in curls that were not very long, for she had polled it three years before, as Eolon knew, and had offered it to the goddess in place of her virginity. He spoke her name and questioned her, and she answered him, speaking a mingling of Greek and of her own tongue that made him in his turn smile. "I liked you, too,"

she said. She made a cup of her two hands, and bending over the stream, dipped in the place where her face and Eolon's were reflected and took the water and offered it to him. And he drank and kissed her hands and the drops that trickled on her arms and neck. She nestled on his breast, whispering that the goddess had been very kind to give her a fine poet for a husband and not the fat merchant whom she had feared her mother would surely sell her to some day. "But I made many spells," she said. "I knew that you would be rich and handsome. And they say that you are very wise!" It seemed that she also had much strange wisdom, learnt from her mother and in the temple. "I can call down the Goddess," she told Eolon, "and the Moon god, if I please. I can make out the figures of the stars so that you need never do anything except in a good and propitious hour." Eolon believed all she said, she was so gentle and so beautiful.

CHAPTER VII

Elon loved his wife. He loved her beauty, which was of its nature grave, almost sad, as sweet to him as the dark melancholy of the sea. In their lodging beside the river Pactolus he spread carpets and cushions that she might lie at ease, in winter before the great brazier, in summer upon the roof, whence they could watch the night sky and the river and the torches and the golden serpents that the lights flung wriggling across the water. And to look upon her beauty as she rested there, or to ponder the thought of it, brought him as much pleasure, sometimes, as to caress her. It awakened a thousand images in his mind, pictures that he fashioned into song or followed, half-dreaming, through the night's quiet. Yet these images did not rise from his mind, he thought, but from her beauty, that was akin to the sea, to the young trees, to all things that Pythagoras had said were earthly forms of a divine harmony. The huge sky, as he gazed at it, became a part of her loveliness, and the river and the lights and the warmth and the glow of the brazier, which was Hestia, the sacred hearth, core of every man's home and of the universe. Yet he loved her kisses, also. And he loved her docile temper that made her as happy to speak as to be silent, to hear him sing as to sing herself, to lie quietly or to dance, moving her slim body to his playing as though the music, too, were part of her.

For her and for himself he was at pains to make a life that was secure about them, sober, peaceful, an enclosed garden wherein the truths that the wisdom of

Orpheus and the words of Pythagoras had sown would flower richly, in poems that would be for the edification and the delight of men, in the deep inner content that was the soul's growth. After his marriage he had assumed the Orphic dress; he abstained strictly from meat and revelry and every form of lightness, save love, which Pythagoras had said was not a sin. And he laboured long and earnestly. Despite a repugnance that never altogether left him, he had become a teacher, instructing the youth of Sardis in all that could be told of the wisdom of Orpheus, its discipline and its philosophy. In obedience to his Cretan masters, he mingled with the Orphic darkness tales of the gods and other matters that were familiar to his hearers. Of the mysteries he did not speak, for they were secrets and in every case could not be revealed through teaching and the mind; they were experiences of the soul, known only in initiation. So he grew in riches and in honour. The Hellenic learning was highly prized in Lydia at that time, whether it was of the Ionian cities that Cræsus had conquered or of Greece itself.

But he gave nothing of his heart to his pupils; he had no sooner ceased his lessons than he forgot them and turned again to his own thoughts and to Myloë. And he disliked the gold that he earned in this way more even than the task that earned it. He would not spend it on his pleasure. From time to time he bought Myloë gifts—perfumes and flowers to lay before the goddess, flax for her weaving, a pair of blue-furred cats to make her smile, a slave to serve her. If he laboured and grew rich, he said, it was for her sake; he loved her well enough not to begrudge the sacrifice. But for himself he bought no unnecessary thing. In their

lodging, that was so small the women's apartments were scarcely separate from his, there was no softness but the carpets and cushions on which they slept and the couch whereon Eolon was wont to lie, to eat and rest after his teaching. He would have no paintings, no wealth of stuffs, no handsome vases. He avoided all public shows; indeed the great town with its mirth and violence, its amorous and bloody festivals, its games and noisy music and wild dancing, was to him as though it were not. To Myloë he said that his master's law was sober. In fact his dislike for luxury was unreasoned, a movement of the blood that made him fear excess—which maybe he loved.

So they lived, wrapped in their loneliness and their content. Each day Eolon went among his pupils; at sunset he returned, averting his eyes from the streets' agitation, to peace and Myloë. He sought to teach her also, striving to adorn her mind, to form her nature, for he did not want a wife only, he said, but a companion whose thoughts would follow his thoughts, whose heart would move with his, fitted to it as the mould is fitted to the cast. And it seemed to him that he was successful. She was apt as well as docile. Reclining on his couch, Eolon told her of the eternity of the soul and of its rebirth and of the great joy to which it came at last, where lives were holy; and Myloë sat by his feet and listened and answered him. And if, having washed and eaten, he felt hungry again while he discoursed, she would run to fetch him bread or fruit, and if he sweated in the hot Lydian air, she would again bring basins and scented water to bathe him. In a little while she had learnt Greek; she had committed all of his poems to memory and could set them down, with the new songs that he composed, on skin

or paper; she could speak as he did of many of the truths of Orpheus.

Eolon liked also, sometimes, to learn from her of her own wisdom. It was mostly of spells and formulæ, medicines that she brewed to compel the goddess to her will, ointments that she rubbed upon herself or Eolon to keep his love safe. Her pursuit of these matters was in no wise disturbed or altered by the new learning Eolon gave her. She did but add the one wisdom to the other, finding all easy and all reconcilable. Every day, as he had promised, she consulted the stars in his name, sitting before a tray of sand and drawing figures on it with her forefinger. Her predictions seldom came to pass. In the evenings, if he wished, she told him tales, the sacred tales, terrible and amorous, of her country's kings and their gods. It made Eolon smile to see how, in Lydia, women were honoured and beloved. The famous story that was known in Greece and among the Hebrews, of the step-mother or the prince's wife who offered herself to the handsome youth and was rebuked, Phædra or the wife of Potiphar, became in Lydia the story of a young man swooning for love of his father's wife. Myloë knew the version wherein the woman provoked the man, but it, too, as she told it, was kinder to the woman.

Besides her stories, which delighted him, and her astrology, which he liked for Pythagoras' sake, Myloë practised an art that astonished Eolon greatly. From the shape of a man's hand and from the lines inscribed on it, she could, she said, discover his nature and his destiny. She examined Eolon's palm constantly. Sometimes she did this gaily, crying: "The Goddess is strong in you, my Eolon. If I am clever you will love me always." At other times she shook her head.

"The line curves down," she sighed. "The Moon—the mind—shifts as the wind shifts. . . ."

For three years no children were born to them. Myloë was fearful, wondering if the goddess hated her, but Eolon was glad; he had no wish for children, for any creature, thought, concern, that might come between him and his love. But in the fourth year Myloë conceived. Hitherto they had remained in their first lodging. Now, because of the noise and bustle, the prayers, the visits, the pother of women that was all about, Eolon hired a house with many rooms and many terraces and a big apartment for himself where he could teach and read and compose his poems, far from the women's place and its women's business. And because, during those months, he was lonely and sore at heart, missing Myloë, he lived less narrowly in other ways also. Sometimes he invited the younger and handsomer of his pupils to sup and talk to him through the empty night, and sometimes he bade dancing girls and flute-players entertain him. For a while he took another woman, a Galilean whose short close-curling hair was the colour of a lion's mane, and whose face also was like a little lion's, so flat was the small curved nose, so arched the heavy nostrils. But her strangeness did not comfort him. He sighed, reflecting that he had no taste for any woman but Myloë. By some trick of his desire or by the will of the goddess he was bound forever, he thought, to the wife who had been the Mother's especial gift, the sign of her divine favour. And knowing that such an exclusive passion was not customary among men, he was half-ashamed, half-frightened.

As Myloë's time drew near his humour darkened; he felt defrauded, as though some oath that had been

made to him were broken. His son was born, and after a certain time Myloë returned to him. But still Eolon was not altogether comforted. His life in this new house that had not been consecrated by their greatest love, that contained a stranger, was unquiet now, a familiarity mingled with an unfamiliarity, like a dream-life. Myloë was changed, he thought. She had grown fatter. She was gentle, loving, as eager to please him as before; she soon learnt not to chatter always of the child, which was a talk that quickly wearied him. But often, during the hours when they were alone together, he saw the smile that had been for him turn towards another thought, while her eyes and her attention with them went wandering in the direction of the women's place, where her son was. So Eolon knew that his fears had been fulfilled, that another love had come between them. And he knew also that the work that he had done, shaping Myloë's mind and heart, had failed. Her soul was but a woman's after all, he thought. And a bitterness overcame him, more cruel than any he had known since childhood.

Sometimes, wishing to please her and because it was the custom, he bade Myloë bring the child to him. The sight of it awakened none of the pride, the sense of achievement and of mastery that other men, it seemed, enjoyed. On one of these occasions, returning to his house earlier than he had said, he found them both awaiting him. Myloë lay on the ground, and her son played and crawled all over her. He pushed at her with his fists, kicked with his feet, even as the little cats, born of the blue-furred pair that Eolon had given Myloë, buffeted and kicked at the she-cat's belly. And a sudden anger filled Eolon. At once

Myloë sat up and snatched the child into her lap and soothed and smoothed it. But her look had been so like an animal's that the thought of the cats ran in Eolon's mind. He remembered how, from the first litter, the male had stolen one and eaten it, like Kronos. And Eolon rebuked Myloë, not coolly as he was wont to do, but with a peculiar heat, scolding her for her beast-like ways.

And yet, he thought, he did not hate the child. When, by chance, he came upon it and its mother was not by, he felt a stirring, as of compassion. He thought: "When it is older I will teach it. As my father taught me, but better. Its soul will grow like mine." And when, a year or so later, the child fell ill, and despite the physician's doses and cantrips, the ceremonies of the priests, the incantations of its mother, died, Eolon grieved very sorely. He wept for the young boy whom he would have trained to love virtue and his master Orpheus; and he felt sorrow for Myloë's sorrow and a strange remorse, as though, unwittingly, he had caused the child to die. While Myloë and the women filled the house with lamentation, he lay alone in his chamber, praying. For death was ever fearful. He tried to think, as his faith bade him, that in truth there was no death, that already his son's spirit was incarnate in another happier body. He tried to picture that body. But he could not. He could not even recall his son's face. The creed of Orpheus had forbidden him to look on the dead child, even as it had forbidden him to look on Myloë's labour. It would have been better, he thought, if he had never seen the boy at all, following the Persian fashion, which allowed no man to behold a male child until it was five years old, lest the father should grow to love it in its babyhood, they

said, and it should indeed die and the father's heart be saddened.

After that Myloë had no more children. Eolon's life became again what it had been; his wife, his leisure were his own; he dreamed once more on Myloë's beauty and on the mysteries of Orpheus and of the Mother. But he was not happy. Already his thoughts were darkened, knowing that Myloë, whose soul he had hoped to make true brother of his own, was but a woman and a bed-fellow. And as the months passed and no other son was promised to her, a considerable change came over Myloë. Her sweetness, her love, her nature altered. She who had been so smooth-tempered, grew capricious. She brooded or was tearful; she laughed too loudly or was wrapped in a sullenness that was like the grey cinders that are put upon a fire to contain it: at a touch her impatience burst out. Now if Eolon spoke of Orpheus she listened sulkily or broke into his speech with the sharp cry: "Your Orpheus could not save my son—he cannot give me other sons!" and ran from him to her tray of sand, her pots and crucibles, to inquire, to work the spells that would tell her if her wish would be fulfilled or that would compel its fulfilment. When these moods were on her she refused to wash or dress or perfume herself to please Eolon; her fattened body grew slatternly, so that he, wearying of reproof and exhortation, went from her to other women, whom he hated, or to the young men of the town, whom he dared not love.

And with this transformation all things became transformed and distasteful to him. Because it had been in his mind that his teaching, which was so wearisome, was done for Myloë's sake, now that she

no longer gave him thanks or loveliness, the task was no longer tolerable. And once again his songs failed him. They were grown drab with Myloë. Which was not strange, he thought, since they and his happiness had been reborn from her beauty. The effort of invention was irksome as her shifting temper, as the caresses of dancing girls, as the looks and words of his pupils, as all the sights and sounds and smells of Sardis.

So, on a day when he found her more than usually dull, he bade her angrily be up and make ready, for they were going from Lydia. And in the dawn they left the city, bidding farewell to no one. As he rode Eolon looked forward, towards the sea and Greece, to which he was returning. But Myloë looked back and wept for her mother and her dead son, and for Cræsus' golden city with its walls and strong citadel and the second ghostly city that lay across the plain, the great mounds of earth, like little mountains, where the dead and Alyattes, father of Cræsus, slept in their painted chambers. Eolon reproved her for turning thus towards the tombs. She sat enveloped in her veils, clasping an image of the great goddess.

Her tears soon dried. Indeed as they journeyed, going over the sea to Athens, her sullenness altogether passed. Once again she smiled and was tender to Eolon, offered him love and gentle speech eagerly. Her beauty cleared, so that he saw once more the serene dark eyes, the sweet lips, the happy gravity that he had likened to the melancholy of the sea. But it no longer moved him to the same delight. It stirred desire, an angry craving. But now no images woke in him as he looked at her, as he looked from her to the green, the blue, the purple water, the yellow-striped hills, the island

towns whose painted houses were like handfuls of shells, of coloured pebbles flung down. And a great fear crept into his mind. He had thought that Myloë's beauty and the love born of it would lift his spirit up, carry him at last to the heart of beauty and of ease, Hestia. He wondered now if they were not a trap in which his soul languished.

They came to Athens, and Eolon was torn by an odd mingling of astonishment and sorrow to find all the same in the city he had loved, and all different, from the difference that was in his own heart. As he had done on his first coming from Thrace, he went to Mycon's house. And here, too, he found everything the same, even to Mycon's immediate talk of Pisistratus and of the scandals and quarrelling that were in Athens. For the tyrant had been restored to power. He had formed a new friendship with the party of the Shore by marrying the daughter of its leader, Megacles. But his greatness was not yet secure, Mycon said, for he had refused to love his new wife in a natural manner, so as to give her children. "He does not wish," said Mycon, "to mix his clean blood with the accursed blood of Megacles. He does not wish to raise up seed to murder and to sacrilege. Moreover he has two sons already by his first wife and others by a concubine." So the new wife of Pisistratus had gone complaining to her mother, and Megacles was angry and threatened to expel his son-in-law again from the city. "But the people love our Pisistratus," Mycon repeated. "They know that he is the true foster-child of Athena, a new Theseus, a new Erechtheus. The goddess herself brought him back to Athens. And he has made the town beautiful and rich." All the while that Mycon spoke echoes ran in Eolon's mind. Sadly he looked

back at that far-off day when he had first stood in his patron's house, all dazed with pleasure, and heard this same talk of Pisistratus and his greatness and his virtue. Yet there was sweetness in his pain, the comfort of a beloved familiarity. He answered that Athens had seemed strangely small to him, its poorer quarters darker and dirtier than ever, its richer places not half so fine as those of the Ionian cities where the streets were paved in black and white and many-coloured tiles, and pillars rose like groves of trees about the temples.

When Mycon had related all his news, saying how he himself had increased his wealth and how Polycles also was become a bigger man, ever gaining in honour among the scholars and the priests of Pisistratus, he asked what Eolon had done and what he wished to do in future. And Eolon told him of his travels and his teaching and his marriage and how he was returned now to find a resting-place, not in Athens, for he was weary of cities, but on some quiet hillside in Attica. "Have you money?" Mycon asked, and Eolon told him the sum that he had earned in Sardis. "What will you do with it?" Mycon asked further, and Eolon answered that he would keep it by him and so live for the rest of his life peacefully. Mycon was much astonished, both at the largeness of the sum and at Eolon's proposed use of it. What, he cried, would he then leave so much gold in store for slaves to pilfer and thieves to steal, not turn it into ships and merchandise that would bring him rich returns and a great fortune, maybe, for his sons? And at this Eolon flared out: "No! I have no sons, and will have none, if I must live like Pisistratus!" His own vehemence surprised him; he had not known till then that such

were his feelings towards fatherhood. But having started to speak he could not stop, and went on to exclaim so fiercely, now, against wealth and luxury and the evil that they brought to men's souls that Mycon was utterly amazed. He shook his head. "You men of Orpheus are not good citizens," he said at last. "You are over-much concerned with your soul's safety. You grow selfish and sanctimonious. No good can come to the State from you."

Yet he was ready, even eager, to help Eolon. He procured a house for him, near to the country house of Pisistratus, in the hills above Marathon; he offered to take his gold and use it and serve Eolon with a pension all his life long. Which offer Eolon accepted gladly, for he liked the notion of a fortune strictly limited, neither great nor too small, safe and leaving few opportunities for change or rashness.

CHAPTER VIII

So Eolon went with Myloë to live in the Ikarian hills, in a farmhouse that Mycon had bought for them and that had belonged to Pisistratus. It stood in the pinewoods, near to a valley where water ran and where many beasts and birds lived; Eolon forbade his men to kill or harry them. Below the house were vineyards and olive groves. And there were goats that browsed among the strawberry trees, and bees for Myloë to tend, herbs and fruit and spring water for her brewing.

Everything was as Eolon had wished, peaceful, forgetful of the toil and weariness of cities, pleasant to the sight and to the smell. From the brow of a hill, a little way before his door, he looked down on the great plain of Marathon and on the sea and the island mountains of Eubœa, across the sea. Throughout the summer he went often to the hill to watch the dawn rise, lovely or threatening. And he walked beneath the olive trees; he climbed, rested, climbed again in the high scrubby places where the goats fed, or in the tree-clad valley where he could spy upon the beasts who were his brothers and whom he tried to keep safe. Yet watching the dawn he was not happy : its vastness and the memories that it recalled filled him with regret. Watching the beasts he sighed, thinking how they, who were so far from God, were at ease in their loves and hungers while he, whose soul was close to heaven, suffered.

For though Myloë's temper ran as smooth in those days as the little spring that flowed beside his house,

doubt and fear grew in Eolon. The thought that had come to him during their journey to Athens moved constantly in his mind, and now he trembled lest Myloë's love, since it had not carried him beyond desire into that peace of the spirit that Pythagoras had promised, might not be worse than a trap, a hindrance to his soul's growth, lest it might not be, in truth, an impure, dangerous thing. Once again he brooded on the thought that all life was impurity, an evil to be shunned, and on the terror, which Pythagoras' words had never altogether exorcised, that of all impure things love of women might be the foulest. There was no mating, he knew, between his soul and Myloë's. He no longer spoke to her of Orpheus or of any spiritual matter. The flesh alone bound them, that flesh which was of the sons of Earth, devourers of Dionysos. And again Eolon trembled, a darkness covered his heart. It came to him that maybe Myloë herself was not of the heavenly Mother, daughter of the kindly spirit whom Pythagoras worshipped and who had visited Eolon on Mount Ida, but a daughter wholly of the ancient earthy wickedness that had destroyed the holy child. Then indeed, he thought, her love could not be doves' wings to carry his soul upward but serpents' coils, vultures' beaks to hold it down.

Now when he caressed her he was afraid and turned from her quickly. Yet because he still desired her, or love, he could not leave her altogether. And there were times when he could not believe that she was evil, her face and air were so familiar and so innocent as she moved here and there through the gardens and the house, pursuing her woman's tasks. With her maids she milked the goats, made the cheeses that Eolon ate with his fruits and bread, bent in the

autumn above her presses and her stills, sat in winter before her loom, weaving the flax for Eolon's robes and for her own, for she followed him in all his disciplines. But there were other times when the mere sight of her white dress sickened him. Her breasts, which were still fat as though she suckled children, all her plump body seemed to him the image of thoughtless, soulless, dangerous matter.

Her mind was empty, he told himself, and all his love his teaching had not increased by a hair's breadth the stature of her little, foolish, woman's soul. He had forbidden her in the autumn to join the men and women at the vintage feast. The ancient goat-god, who was also Dionysos, disgusted him, and the phalluses and masks, the caperings and songs and lusts of the festival. So also, at the time of the birth of the new sun, he would not let her go with the priestesses, the nymphs of the kid Dionysos, when they ran over the hills to worship and devour the god who was their nursling. But that night, waking suddenly, Eolon heard, faint and far off, the women's cry—cha, eohel!—echoing in the frosty air. And though he clapped his hands over his ears, he could not shut out the scenes that the cry recalled, the wildness that he had so often shared, the flames, the snakes, the ecstasy. It angered him, too, that women and not men should be the ministrants. Seeking forgetfulness perhaps, he turned to Myloë. He kissed her. He lay, waiting for sleep, upon her breast. Her warmth and the warmth of the brazier that burnt beside them wrapped him round. But presently he heard again, fainter and fainter as the women climbed the hill, the cry of the orgy. And raising his head to listen, he saw Myloë's eyes and the bright eagerness that was in them. Even

while he loved her, he thought, her soul was not by him in their bed but out on the mountains, enjoying the delights that were familiar to her also. At that moment he knew that while he still loved, he hated her.

The spring, at first, brought him a little ease. He was glad of the warm air and the passing of winter, which had kept him constantly indoors with Myloë. The sight of the flower-patterned hills and of the quieted sea, the smell of violets and pine-trees, which ever awakened memories of Thrace and childhood and blessedness, made him feel that presently, maybe, he he would sing songs again. For all this time he had composed no poems. He had lain idle. He did not wish to work with his men. And for him there was no alternative to song save thought, which was painful to him now, or love. But Myloë, whom seclusion had wearied, blossomed. She moved blithely among the flowers, laughing with her women and the herdsmen. And Eolon was displeased. He did not like to feel in himself, though coming from her, as he imagined, the teasing of the spring. He rebuked Myloë and bade her be quiet and not provoke him. Yet when she obeyed, going very soberly, lowering her eyes as she passed Eolon, he was not comforted. Everything she did, everything she was, exasperated him. There was a goat-herd boy whom Eolon had often watched up in the hills. His body was so lean that the bones showed under the brown skin like rocks beneath thin turf. He played skilfully upon his pipe; he picked the flowers of the strawberry trees and stuck their crimson bunches behind his ears, in his thick, black, oily hair. Eolon seldom spoke to him. But one day he saw Myloë talking to the boy and smiling at him and he was angry. It did not come into his mind that she

might truly desire the boy, that she could wish for any kisses but her husband's. It was but that the sight of her softness, which he loved, was suddenly distasteful to him. He called her to his side. He scolded her. He grew so heated, picturing the scene again, that he struck his hands down upon her shoulders, and having touched her, fell to hitting her again and again, until another passion caught him and his hands sought a different strife.

After that he was afraid. He shrank from his own violence, which was of her making, he thought. He was certain now that Myloë was all temptation, lust, cruelty and rage. And he had many dreams at that time that confirmed his terrors, visions that haunted him throughout the day, born of his short nights' sleep or of the sultry noons that ever brought evil spirits, it was said, horrid and amorous bird-ghosts to foul men's slumbers. Eolon's dreams, as he interpreted them, were of life weakened and love become death. Once he saw a bull, and as he stared at it, the sacred beast, it rose on its hind legs, a cow and half a woman. At another time he saw a nest of eggs, which were duck's eggs perhaps, or perhaps the milky, supple skins that conceal adders. And his heart rejoiced, picturing the lovely holy things that were about to rise therefrom. They would not be birds, he fancied, nor even adders, but great black serpents, tall as himself. They rose and were indeed beautiful and as he had foreseen—tall serpents that swayed up from the ground like black flames. But as he reached out his hands to grasp them they became little wriggling worms, and he woke sweating.

Henceforth he set himself to forget all earthy things and Myloë. He lay alone. He bathed and swam in

every running stream, cleansing his skin with the water's holiness. He spent his days walking or riding over the hills, seeking the quiet that every animal gets when it is wearied. He did not altogether find it. Abstinence could not crush out the images that still moved in his blood, or in his mind. Yet in a measure he forgot Myloë. Whenever his desire turned towards her the memory of his dreams came back and a sickness rose in his stomach. Which was another sign, he thought, warning him of her evil. He put her far from his thoughts, from his sight. In Sardis he had kept her close. Lest he should miss a moment of her presence he had forbidden her to go abroad, even to visit her mother, without him. Now he ordered nothing, forbade nothing. She was free to come and go, to work in the gardens or the meadows, to roam the hills alone or to gossip with the village priestesses, hearing their tales of their gods and their spells, telling them of her own. Often, as he rode out in the morning, he saw her white dress moving between the trees. He turned his head away.

A day came when Eolon returned to his house somewhat later than was usual. It happened that he had gone that day towards Athens. The early summer heat was very great. Lying in a little wood that was not far from the city, on a hill that sloped down to the sea, he had slept longer than was his noonday habit. And he had bathed in the sea and watched the many-coloured sails move across the water, which was the loveliest sight, he thought, in all the world. So it fell out that by the time he reached the woods that were about his house it was sunset. On the wood's edge there was still light. Eolon paused and snuffed the heavy scent he loved. But in the wood darkness gathered; the

pine-needles made the ground dangerous. And Eolon and his horse were very tired. He turned and went along the side of the wood towards a hut that he knew of, to get himself torches to light the shadows and the slippery way. In the hut a woodcutter lived, one of his own men.

Eolon was so weary, his mind was so far from every thought of Myloë, that when he pushed open the door and saw in the low light a woman lying there, he did not recognise her. Myloë slept beside the sleeping woodcutter, resting in the ease that comes with comfortable familiarity. Eolon thought: "a woman," and would have called out for torches and the man's company throughout the wood. But the next moment he knew her and gave a furious cry. Myloë woke screaming; her lover sprang up and ran forward; and before he knew what he did Eolon had jumped on him and they fell struggling. Eolon was not aware, then, that he was weary, or that to kill was the greatest of all sins, or that what he seemed to fight for was an evil thing and a temptation, a danger to be turned from. The joy of anger was upon him; his hands itched to kill and were happy in their itching.

They rolled and wrestled on the ground, and Myloë screamed, watching them. But the hut was far from other huts; no man heard her. Beside her screams, which were of hope and fear, reasonable sounds, the noises of the fighters were dull as though no life were in them, grunts and hisses such as air-filled bladders make if they are squeezed or punched suddenly, and great thuds, like earth-filled sacks tossed to and fro. In the dim room their bodies heaved and sank, shapeless as waves that the winds move, or the ground when earthquakes stir it. So they fought. By the

hearth the woodcutter's axe lay; Eolon had not seen it. And presently the woodcutter, who was a lusty man and young as Eolon had been when he threw bulls and flung axes nimbly in Thrace, got to his feet. Eolon jumped up also, but he was not quick enough, and now the other had dealt him a blow so that he fell and his head was cut. And Myloë gave a loud scream, perhaps of triumph, perhaps of excitement or terror. For it chanced that he had fallen where the axe lay. It offered itself to his hand, half-stunned as he was and half-blinded by the blood that ran from his forehead. And he grasped it and lifted himself up and threw it. As he did so he heard a voice that might have been Myloë's crying "Oh, do not kill him!" but that seemed to Eolon to be the voice of his teacher in Athens, or the voice of Pythagoras, of Orpheus. "You must not kill," it said.

When he awoke it was almost dark. He thought that some one stood beside him. "Is he dead?" he whispered, but no one answered. He raised himself upon his elbow and peered round; he began to crawl here and there, groping in the shadows where maybe a body lay. He found the axe. It was a little wet. But Myloë and her lover were not there. He struggled to the door and stood upright and gave a call. There was no answer. His horse was gone. They had taken his horse; they had fled. And so great was the comfort that flooded Eolon's heart, because he had not killed, that the tears poured from his eyes. He flung out his arms. He threw himself upon the ground, kissing it. He raised his face to the ashen sky. "Father!" he cried out, and again, through his weeping, "Father! Father!"

CHAPTER IX

That night Eolon rested very quietly in his house among the pine-trees. His startled servants put herbs and water on his cut and bathed his skin and gave him herbs and water to drink, to cool the little fever that weariness and his wound had brought him. But the discomforts of his body did not break the singular, new serenity of his mind. He thought: "It is because Myloë, who was evil, has gone." And he thought: "It is the grace of Orpheus, who saved me from the darkest sin."

In the morning his servants, hoping to please him, came with news of Myloë and her lover. She and a man sorely wounded in the shoulder, they said, had been seen in the woods, going towards Corinth; a little search and they could be brought again to Eolon for punishment. But Eolon said: "Let them go." Presently, still zealous, they discovered the girl who had been Myloë's accomplice, whose business it had been each day, if her mistress did not return in good time, to warn her of Eolon's homecoming. Weeping and striking her head upon the ground, she confessed that Myloë had loved the woodcutter since the spring, since the days, as Eolon calculated, when he had let her go altogether free. But Eolon would not have the girl whipped. Even the shame that all men should know of Myloë's love and of his cuckoldom, did not anger him. "Suffering and violence are of Hell," he said. His servants marvelled. "A strange spirit is in him," they said. "He is mad."

Beneath his quiet, which was of an unfamiliar coolness in his blood and of wonder at the miracle that his master Orpheus had made for him, there was bewilderment and a fear that was unlike any fear that he had known, without anger or hatred, a strange, hushed awe. For although he had not killed, rage and the lust of killing had been in him, and as he brooded upon these evils, these besieging ghosts, he was no longer certain that they were all Myloë's. On the morning that the fever left him he rose at dawn and washed in the spring that ran beside his house and went to the brow of the hill, overlooking Marathon. It seemed that everything he saw was new. Out of the night's mists the light was fashioning a new great plain, dappled with olive groves and fields of yellow corn, a new range of mountains far away, a new pale sea. And even while he felt this sweet fresh world about him and rejoiced in it, a great sadness overcame him and he knelt and struck his fists upon his breast, and said: "I have sinned."

Now he looked back on the dark hour in the hut beside the wood, and on Myloë and her lover and himself and on the lust and jealousy that had been in him then. And a new light was given to him. He saw that in the hut, in his heart, the mystery of the world's beginning had been accomplished. Once again the giants had sprung out of the earth, once again they had grappled in the night, seeking to slay and to devour the holy child, Dionysos, Eolon's soul. But it was not from Myloë's evil only that they had sprung but from Eolon's evil; the dark powers that had moved in his body, driving him so near the brink of murder that but for the voice of Orpheus plucking him back he would have infallibly have fallen and lost his soul

forever, were his own passions, the creatures of his own earth-born flesh. And Eolon raised his head and stared before him, trembling. If he was safe now, free to receive upon his eyes and skin and heart the blessing of the world's beauty, it was through no merit of his own, but only through the grace of Orpheus. And again Eolon bowed; he struck his head upon the ground as the treacherous slave girl had done. "I have sinned, I have sinned, I have sinned," he said. For there was still evil in his flesh and would be as long as he lived, and the miracle of Orpheus might not be made again.

That day he left his house and rode towards Athens. The pollution of spilt blood was on him and the holiness of the miracle. He sought a man of Orpheus, a priest of his own faith, with whom he could perform the first ceremonies of purification and atonement. They would not be enough, he thought, a whole life of purity would scarcely be enough to wash him altogether clean. So he went humbly. Yet he was not altogether downcast. The quiet that had come upon him lingered. He was no longer troubled, distressed; the agitation that had been in him since before his son's birth was gone, with Myloë. And Orpheus loved him.

So he went with a good heart. The day was very hot; the air hummed about him in the noise of insects. For it was midsummer. That morning the reapers had begun to cut the corn that was below Eolon's home, and as he drew nearer to Athens they were in great Eleusis also, in the fields that stretched away far to the road's right, a vast, unrippled sea of gold. As he reached the city he saw the procession of the Thargelia, of the feast of first-fruits, go out across the leopard-coloured plain. Before it went two men, the victims

whom the people led out to die that day to rid the land of its impurities.

The men were very ugly. It was not said, now, that they, the city's scapegoats, its offscourings, were gods or kings or priests. Indeed they were chosen always from the prisons, criminals whose lives had been as vile as the vileness that was put upon them. And they were chosen hideous of face and ungainly of body, true semblances of evil. So the people, following them to their death, felt no compassion; they threw their stones and spat their curses with a good will, in loathing for the men's ugly lives and persons and the filthy ghosts that had become a part of them. Yet as Eolon saw them go stumbling towards the rocky places and the sea, they wore the wreaths that Myrrha had worn and her necklaces of figs, and they carried wands as she had done, and presently they, too, would be scourged, while the flute played its little air. At first Eolon gave no particular thought to the familiar sight, and then he shuddered, saying: "You must not kill."

But riding on into the city, he thought: "It is a good omen." For the ease of his heart and the pleasure that he found looking on familiar things made him feel that in truth he was rid of sinfulness, greed, lust, envy, hatred, rage. "If I am happy I am pure," he told himself. And with the image of the two filthy, wretched men still in his mind, he fell to wondering if, in the spirit as well as in the flesh, suffering and pain might not have holy virtues. For even as it was by these men's death that Athens lived, her harvest cleansed, all ill-health taken from her, so might it be by spiritual pain that the soul of man was vivified. In the mysteries the foulness of the earth was smeared on

men in order that it should be washed off again; there was no rebirth, no joy for the soul until it had passed through agony and death. Earth cleansed of earth, death of death. So in the many months of sorrow that Eolon had endured, sorrow, maybe, had been wiped from him; so at the last, in the hut beside the wood, violence had rid him of violence, lust had washed lust away. And there too, his blood had been poured out, his tears shed, as in the mysteries blood and tears were spilt for holiness. Bowing his head, Eolon rode past the sanctuary of the Furies, the snakes of death and vengeance; he smiled at the stone maids and young men who stood not far away before the temple of the Maid Athena. He was humble but he was not afraid.

From that day on Eolon resolved to live as Orpheus had lived after the death of Eurydice. He followed the discipline of his master very exactly; he sought purity and the ways of peace. No women came again into his bed. He no longer desired them. And in every case chastity was good, he thought; the especial virtue that was in young children came from their chastity; the abstinence of priests and priestesses, during the holy days, was of itself a mighty power. At later times it was said that Orpheus brought into Greece the love of boys. However this may be, Eolon in his day turned from the bodies and the souls of women.

It happened that he found other things to occupy him. Going to the house of Polycles, to ask his old friend's pardon for the violence that he had shown him long ago, he discovered that the scholar had left the city. He had fled with Pisistratus, who was again gone into exile. And it seemed that Mycon also had

departed, having lost much of his wealth through the disgrace of Pisistratus and the bad storms that had raged that winter, sinking many of his richest ships. With Mycon's vanishing, Eolon's store of gold had vanished. He had nothing now save his house and the land about it. And so he dismissed many of his men, and with those that were left set to work to cultivate his farm himself. In a short while he had, besides food, enough of oil and wine to sell and to buy linen to cover his body and books to increase his mind. For the rest he liked simplicity. Sweating in the groves and vineyards, he had little leisure to think of love or the flesh's hungers.

Time passed and Eolon grew old. The beard that he wore now, after a fashion common among philosophers, grew grey, grew white; each year the work of his olive trees and vines seemed heavier, so that he left almost all of it to his young men. And when they robbed him, which they did sometimes, he was not angry. For the peacefulness that had come into his soul grew with the years. It became fuller, deeper, like a river that draws near to the sea. He had lost love, he had lost gold. Fame he had rejected. And reflecting on these losses, this refusal, he thought: "I have stripped myself of everything for truth's sake." He still believed that the pains that he had endured, whether at the hands of Fate or at his own hands, by giving up the glories that his youth had craved for, were the bringers of his peace; he still told himself: "I have been the scapegoat of my own soul." He wrote many poems in those years, tales of the gods, or descriptions of the simple matters about him, trees and cornfields, the ways of bees and birds and beasts and farmers. Yet still he would not recite them at the

games and festivals that Pisistratus instituted when he was restored, this time securely, to the tyranny. Polycles, with whom Eolon had become reconciled, often pressed his friend to sing, or at the least to attend the splendid new entertainments that were the new ceremonies of Dionysos. But Eolon refused. "No greatness has come to me," he said, "and none will come. I am obscure and am content that it should be so."

He had lost youth; he had lost strength. Now he was an old man with sunken eyes and lids that blinked like the heavy naked lids of young birds. And it came into his mind that he would like, before death took him, to speak once of the peace that he had discovered and that was his great work. And so, one year, between spring and summer, in the lazy weeks of the earth's carrying, he went to Samos to seek Pythagoras. But his friend was gone—to Babylon maybe, maybe to Egypt, no man knew. Eolon travelled southwards likewise. He did not find his friend, but he found much to interest and edify him, especially among the Hebrews. From Tyre he went to Crete and saw again the bronze axe that he had offered in the birth-cave of Zeus, the axe of purification that was the self-same axe, he told himself, whose feebleness had kept him, with the blessing of Orpheus, from killing Myloë's lover. But to talk to the priests, to walk on the hillside or by the streams and trees and not to see Pythagoras there made him sad. So he departed. In all those years he had never returned to Thrace. There was no new wisdom for him in that land, he knew, and no Pythagoras, and to recall the ancient wisdom, the wisdom of his father, whom he had loved, was sadder than anything.

Because he loved the sea he sailed to Corinth. From that city he journeyed on towards Lebadea in Boetia, where there was an ancient grove and oracle, and where of late, as he knew, certain priests of Orpheus had taken the governance. To the accustomed ceremonies of the place they had added many others that were peculiar to their master, so that, while the people said that it was a Greek spirit, one Trophonios, who vouchsafed strange visions, spoke with strange voices in the dark and terrifying pit that was the oracle, the true lord of Lebadea was the saint of Thrace, invisible, unnamed, all-powerful. Eolon, now, made no outcry against such blendings, such concealments. On his way to the famous sanctuary he visited every shrine, and in each he performed the customary rites, doing all that the priests and priestesses required of him.

So it chanced that he came upon a little temple hidden in the woods. He went to it and prayed and offered sacrifice, speaking words in his heart that made them acceptable to the Sky Zeus and to Orpheus. He noticed that, strangely as it seemed to him, many matters in the temple had an Orphic turn, and so when he had finished, he stayed and questioned the priestess, who was a fat woman, old and wrinkled yet bold-looking, which was an air that Eolon did not like. What did she know, he asked, of Orpheus? And she answered that she knew much, besides many great secrets of the foreign gods. "I can call down the Mother," she said, "or the Moon god, who has such power over women and over love that he can bring any woman you desire to your bed." And she told him further that she had certain very rare, very potent charms that gave happiness in this life and eternal comfort and the friendship of the gods in the next, and

that these charms were of Orpheus. "They are poems that he wrote with his own hand," she said. "A spirit brought them to me from the Hebrus." At the notion of his master's songs, holy things, being offered in this way, together with spells to make a lecher pleased and incantations that worked evil, Eolon's anger, which had slept so long, awakened. But when he saw the tablets he was astonished and his anger passed, for the poems inscribed thereon were his own poems.

Only then, peering into the woman's face, did he recognise his wife, Myloë. At first he would have turned and hurried away. But curiosity held him and the certainty that she, on her side, did not know him. His beard was a disguise, he thought, and the cool look that had come into his eyes and the smile to which his lips had grown accustomed and the thirty years that had passed since she had fled from him. So he bought the tablets, and after he had paid for them, giving the full price that she asked, he remained a while in the little temple that smelt of cooking and of spilt blood and sour herbs and old hides, cut from the sacrifices. From outside the shrine came the sound of voices, speaking, quarrelling, which were the voices of Myloë's sons and daughters, she said. And Eolon questioned her, and she told him something of her story; how she had been married and had left her husband, and had lived for many years with another man, and how this second husband had left her when her youth was gone, and she had worked spells and charms for her bread and had helped to deliver women and had told fortunes until at last she had found a small livelihood here, in the shrine. "What manner of man was your first husband?" Eolon asked, and she answered: "He? He was a poet. A good man

but overfond of his own soul. And I wished for many children . . ." which were strange words to Eolon, to whom Myloë had been the core of beauty and of love and song and sin.

Travelling eastward he came presently to Lebadea. Here, as always, he submitted himself humbly to the priests, bowed in lowliness and reverence to their bastard gods, to their rites, that were of Olympus and the ancient Earth and Orpheus. He dwelt in the appointed house, which was dedicated to Good Fortune and the Good Spirit, who was a great snake. He sacrificed to the ghost of the oracle and to Apollo, said to be the eldest son of Zeus, and to Kronos, the old, old man, and Demeter, mother of the corn, and Zeus the King, most glorious with his most glorious mate, Hera, whose surname here was Driver of Chariots. He bathed in the river; he killed a ram, in a pit, by night, to give the earth-spirits blood and strength and to provide entrails whereby the priests would read the highest omens. And after this and many other things were done, and the signs judged favourable, and after he had gone again to the river and been anointed with oil by two boys who were his ministrants, virgins just come to manhood, he was led by two priests to the spring called Forgetfulness that he might drink and lose all memory of everything that he had known, and then to the spring called Memory that he might ever know and keep the visions that he would presently behold or the sounds that he would hear. For sometimes it was a being that appeared in the darkness of the hidden sanctuary, and sometimes it was a voice that cried or whispered. Lastly, having adored an image, he went down a ladder into a deep well, holding cakes of barley and honey in his two

hands, offerings to the pit, and entered feet foremost into a hole, the gateway of the sacred place that was the bosom of the earth, he thought, that was Hell.

It was said that no man had died in the sacred place, whether through fear or any other cause. But already Eolon was much afraid from the words that the priests had said to him and the strange waters that he had drunk and the alarms that wakened in his heart, because of his flesh's evil, and the thought of what might come before his eyes or speak in his ear or touch him in the darkness. And he was weakened by long life and by the austerities that he had practised. No sooner were his knees through the hole than it seemed that he was sucked violently in, as though by the hand of a mighty wind or eddying river. He swirled through the air, he fell and lay, trembling. And what he saw at first brought his terror near to swooning. For once again a dim white form stood by him, the same form, as he supposed, that he had known in childhood and in the cave of Ida, and whose face he had never clearly seen. Had his parched lips allowed, he would have screamed, for he felt sure that the figure was the Mother's, or else some no less awful female image of her wrath or of Myloë's. But the figure bent nearer, at last it showed its face. And behold it was the face of his father.

In that moment it seemed to Eolon that he spoke and that his father answered him. And although he did not know what his words were, he was overcome with a great joy, the wonder that perfect knowledge had come into his soul, beyond his mind's understanding. His delight was so great that he could not contain it. He was old and very weary.

It was said that no harm had ever come to any man

in that dark pit. And so, in a little while, seeing that Eolon did not return, the priests came down to find him and to fetch him forth. They carried him to the temple where they made a pretence of putting him upon the stool and questioning him, according to their custom. The look of happiness upon his face was enough, they said, to tell them that his vision of the other world was kindly. So they took him once again to the house of Good Fortune and the Good Snake, and the servants of the Snake washed his body and purified him. And he recovered, but only for a short time. When he had drunk and smiled at those about him, he laid his head back and soon he died. The servants of the Good Snake told the priests that at the last a manner of ecstasy shook him and that he closed his eyes, as though in rapture. And then again he spoke, but they did not hear his words.

They buried him in the ground, earth to earth, following the ancient practice and the new rites of Orpheus. After a while the news reached Polycles and he came to the grave and offered sacrifice. He went also to Eolon's house and took his poems. For the priests of Pisistratus were making books at that time of the songs of the Thracian bards, Orpheus, and Musæus and Thamyris, and a book likewise of the stories of the gods that Hesiod wrote.

BOOK IV

Those that made the faith of Orpheus died: Pythagoras after Pherecydes his master, and the scholars of Pisistratus and the priests that lived in those days. But what they made survived in the hearts and minds of other men.

It grew and grew, and with each growth it became more subtle and more strange. The object of these later men was not, indeed, to make the faith of Orpheus so dark that none but a Heracleitus, a Plato, could understand it. Rather they wished to make it seem more true in men's eyes and so more safe from the attacks of unbelievers.

Yet what they wrought was very complex. In common with all thinking men they sought a first cause, some solid ground whereon they might take their stand and lift the world. And the ground they chose was Time. From Time, dwelling in emptiness, all things came, they said. For Time begat Æther and Chaos, and from Æther and Chaos was born a silver egg, which burst and brought forth Eros or Phanes, who was of double nature, both male and female. And Phanes begat the Sun, the Moon and Night, who begat Heaven and Earth, who begat the Titans, of whom was Kronos. And Kronos, after he had cut his father's manhood from him, begat Zeus, and Zeus, after he had swallowed Phanes, begat Dionysos. For it was not enough to the followers of Orpheus that Dionysos should be the greatest of the sons of Zeus. He must be the supreme god, he must be the Divine itself. And so, following their own notions of rebirth, they said that in truth Dionysos was Phanes reborn, of himself the two-sexed origin of life, devoured by Zeus. So Dionysos was older than Zeus, so he

was part of Zeus, so he was equal, superior to Zeus.

As for the manner of his earthly birth, how Zeus, in the form of a great snake, fathered him upon the maid Persephone, goddess of the earthy underworld, and how he was killed and eaten by the Titans and born again of Semele, whose name is also of the earth, that is a Greek story, half-told already and of little moment now. What mattered chiefly to these later men was the raising up of their Son-god until in many places he was mingled with his father, until he equalled or surpassed his father. This oneness of the Father and the Son they declared, as I believe, in their sacred text, which seems to speak of Zeus, the snake, begetting Dionysos, who in Crete, as Zagreus, was a bull, was a horned child, but which I think reveals at once their darkest doctrine concerning the identity of life and death and their highest faith concerning the identity of the Father and the Son. "The Snake is Father of the Bull," they said. "The Bull is Father of the Snake."

And the oneness of Zeus and Dionysos was upheld by many priests in many lands. The philosophers, whose business it was to seek the first cause and to explain its operations, helped to develop the notion: the Greek thinkers who held that the One must be the origin of the Many, the seed and the branches and the fruit, the centre and the circumference; and the Jewish thinkers whose faith in Jehovah, their only god, bade them believe that all divinity must indeed be one. Thus Philo the Jew, heir in great Alexandria to the Greek wisdom and the Egyptian wisdom and the Hebrew wisdom, with which was mixed, since his forefathers had dwelt in Babylon, the ancient wisdom

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of the Chaldæan and the Elamite star-gazers, said that there was one God, supreme, perfect, alone. This Supreme Being made the world, not by begetting, after the ancient fashion, for he was utterly apart from all things, nor by creation, for he was perfect and could suffer no extension, no change. He made the world, said Philo, through forces that were in a sense separate from himself, after the manner of the Eastern angels or the Western gods, yet were of his substance, being his Ideas, his Powers. And the source and chief, the essence and full expression of these powers was his Logos, his Word or Reason. The Word of God made the world and man, whose soul was also of the divine substance but lived imprisoned in the body, which was evil. (Orpheus had said: "the body is the grave of the soul.") Flesh was foulness, the appetites and desires of the flesh were wicked. If a man would look in this life upon the face of God, he must renounce the flesh; if he would, after his death, return and dwell in the Divine that was his soul's home, he must constantly and forever guard against the lusts and greeds of the flesh. In those days men were growing weary of a licence that was not freedom. They sought a way wherein, hedged by new rules that gave security, that left them no responsibilities and no decisions, they could find peace.

Concerning the origin of the flesh and of evil, how it happened that one god who was all good had made wickedness and suffering, or if he had not made them, how they came to be, there was much disputing. Philo said that matter, flesh and all the ills in it, was utterly apart from God, a second substance that was in truth a dim shapelessness, for only in the spirit that gave form and order was there real life. So Philo's

God was less the creator than the builder, the shaper of a two-fold universe. And so, despite his assertion that matter was formless, hence, as it might be supposed, without activity, good or evil, the notion of its natural wickedness, the foulness of the Earth, of the Titans, persisted. The rivalries of matter and spirit, what has been called their enmity, are questions that have not been settled to this day. Although some have said it, it has not been proved to all men's satisfaction that they are one.

After Philo others, mingling his conception of creative powers with the older idea of generation, taking indeed from every priest and thinker that which suited their own fancies best, evolved systems beside which the Orphic system of Phanes and Zeus and the silver egg was simplest simplicity. There was one Simon, both Greek and Jew, born on the ancient eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, who said that fire was the first cause. Fire, which had been Hephæstus perhaps, hidden in the Asian Mount Ida, which had been Dionysos perhaps, springing from the Mount Ida of Crete, fire, which was the Persian's god, was to Simon the Infinite and Boundless power. For "God," Moses had said, "is a burning and consuming fire." Yet this infinity was not the male god of Moses. Like Phanes it was two-natured and like Phanes it gave birth to the ordered universe through a series of Powers emanating from itself, Roots as they were called (for certain Pythagoreans had said: "There are four roots, earth, air, fire and water. From these is the genesis of what is produced"), and in another manifestation Æons (which was the name that the followers of Orpheus gave to the children of Time.)

And these powers, although in a sense separate from

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the infinite fire, were yet of its substance, even as thoughts are of the mind that thinks them, even as the Word of Philo was of the substance of his God, and the Orphic Son was of the substance of the Father. They were six, Mind and Voice and Reason, which are male, Thought and Name and Desire, which are female. Yet in the beginning they were not six but three of two-fold nature, male and female in one form, for the female, she who brings forth, was then a part of the male, was as it were the still dormant activity or expression of the male, of him who is existence and power. Thus in eternity they were three, but in manifestation they were six, Mind with its expression Thought, Voice with Name, Reason with Desire.

Simon said that these six roots, together with the supreme, the incorruptible, the eternal Fire, formed the highest world or Heaven. Together they dwelt and together they gave birth to other worlds that depended, that descended from them. And following the idea—which was of Babylon first, they say, although the Egyptians had it too—that there is correspondence in all things and that everything here below is a reflection, a re-enactment in another form, of that which is in the starry skies, each of these worlds reflected the world above it and transmuted that reflection and passed it on. And each was male and female. So a being who was called the Father in the middle world was the reflection of the Mind that dwelt in the most high, and so he, too, was male and female. And it seems that Simon said that this Father was the Jehovah of the Jews and the Zeus of the Greeks, “sire of gods and men.”

The companion whom he brought forth from himself, his female half, was named Silence. She, the

female part of God, was the " Spirit that brooded over the face of the waters," of whom the Book of Genesis speaks. In another place it was explained that it was the female æon Thought who brooded thus upon the waters and that it was she who, knowing the wishes of the Father, came down from Heaven to a lower world and made there the angels who, in their turn, made our world, the lowest of them all. And men lived in it. As may be seen, the Father did not create them directly; he had no contact with this our earth. But in his higher world he made a likeness of himself, shaped of red dust, as the Bible says, and set it up as the true image of man. And it was of this ideal man that Adam, in our lowest world, was the reflection.

Adam also, being in the image of his prototype who was in the image of the Father, was in the beginning male and female. Into him the female æon Thought infused divinity, so that he, besides his perishable earthy flesh, possessed " that which is blessed and incorruptible," his soul. But the work by which he became divided up into two creatures, man and woman, was not done by Thought. It was the angels whom Thought had made, the rulers of our lowest world, who did the thing. And the division came about through sin and violence, through vileness as dark as the vileness that the Titans wrought when they stole and ate the babe Dionysos. For it happened, Simon said, that these same angels, seeing that their mother Thought was not yet returned to Heaven and the Father, that she still lingered, hovering above the deep, seized her. It was in their minds to keep her on the earth and so to rule it the more powerfully (though some say that they seized her out of carnal desire only). And in order to do this, to prevent her who was the

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Soul of man, from going back, leaving their creation weakened, they divided Adam into two. Thus crippled, his soul could never rise and go again to heaven, thus cloven he and the Thought of God would be in their power forever.

So men and women lived in sweat and suffering—Adam who was of the earth and God and the Spirit, Eve who was brought forth out of Adam. Yet, despite the wicked angels, they were not without hope, for the law that the Father had made, said Simon, could still save man. The Divine Will had ordained that every human soul should live and live again, going ever from body to body until it found its mate, the other half from which it had been riven. And when the two were one again, joined in love, male and female in one flesh, the completed soul returned to Heaven.

Thus, according to the teaching of the Samaritan Simon, disciple of Orpheus and of the Jews, the love that is of the body and that had ever been in a manner a holy thing, became yet holier, an instrument of comfort and of salvation. Yet the notion of an un-fleshly love, a love that was compassion and kindliness and charity, was also spread abroad in those days. The Essenes, who were a company of Jews, praised it. They lived apart, tilling the land and interpreting, by symbol and analogy, the darker writings of the Bible. They condemned the desires of the flesh so utterly that they knew no marriage between men and women. When they wanted children in their company they brought them into it by adoption.

And the gentle Jesus, he whom certain of the Jews proclaimed their Messiah, the Servant of their God,

praised it. He taught that men should love each other and that God, who was their Father, was good. And those who followed him and called themselves Christians taught the same. But for some years after his death the Christians were a lowly people, having little power to sway the princes or the wise men of this world. They were occupied with prayer and with the simple rules that their Master had given them, and with watching for his Second Coming, which they expected directly the last of the Apostles, of those who had seen his face, passed away. Travellers of no long sojourn in one place, they stood beside their tables, sharing their common meal in love and harmony, remembering their lord, yet ever waiting, waiting to be gone.

They, too, preached their faith. Loving their neighbours, they must needs seek to bring them to their own ease, to the glorious immortality, unknown to other men, that would be theirs; they must needs seek to save them from the punishments that threatened the unrighteous at the Second Coming, which was so close at hand. But still, at that time, they preached simply, avoiding philosophy and metaphysics. They were not concerned with the creation of the world, beyond what the Jews preached; they were careless of the nature of the One and of how it came to be divided up so as to make life, manifold and moving; they did not ask by what means the Son had proceeded from the Father, or how the Spirit who had brooded over the face of the waters in the first days of the world, the Spirit who was manifest as a dove, sometimes, was a part of the Divinity. They paid small heed to any woman, flesh or spirit, even to her who had been the mother of Jesus.

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It was in Egypt and in the lands that have been called Phrygian and Lydian and Ionian that the worship of woman lingered. In the cities where Pythagoras had lived, where Eolon had taught, up in the mountains where Attis the pine-tree lay in Cybele's grotto, the Mother still stirred men's hearts. She was Nature, existing everywhere, pervading all things; and the son whom she had conceived, who in his death returned to her, was renewed in her, the son who was perhaps the spirit of ever-recurring life, was beside her. It has been said that he was her mate; the idea of two persons in one form, of the duality that is needed to create movement, life and death, could equally be seen in marriage and in parenthood. The ancient monster Agdestis, native to Phrygia, had been male and female in one body before she became two, lover and beloved, mother, or father, and son. It might be best to say that in these later days the son was held to be part of the twofold Mother, the lively part that died and was made whole again while she remained unchanged.

Love of her who was Cybele here, Isis in Egypt, a hundred others in a hundred other lands, persisted in many ways, but in none so strange as in the faith that grew up in Phrygia after the coming of the Christians. For the Christians and their teaching were spread now throughout the Mediterranean world. They no longer looked for the immediate return of their Master; they had begun to live more closely among other men and to turn their thought toward the thoughts that were about them. So their belief, which was now that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, had come on earth to save men through his death, was known in Greece and Rome and Egypt and in the Phrygian lands of which I am

speaking. The Jewish beliefs were there also, brought by those who had fled from the final downfall of their city Jerusalem, and the thought of Orpheus was still alive, and the words of the Samaritan Simon, besides the ancient beliefs of the people. And the faith that is known as that of the Naassenes, the Ophites or worshippers of the Serpent, was a mingling of all these. Later it was called a Christian heresy; its followers were said to be of small importance. Yet it was the source of many thoughts that were not insignificant. In it the Mother lived, dim, distant but still beloved.

First, above all things visible and comprehensible, the Ophites praised one god. He was the Unknown Father whom, when they were compelled to name the ineffable, to give shape to what cannot be imagined, they called Bythos, "the Deep." From Bythos proceeded not fire but that which is akin to fire, a Light that they saw in man's shape and called the First Man. And from the First Man proceeded his Thought, a second Light, the Second Man; and these two were not two but one, identical in substance and in power. They were called the Father-and-Son, and they were called Adamas, "the Unconquered," which was a title that the Underworld Dionysos bore. And from the Father-and-Son proceeded she whom they called the First Woman or Holy Spirit. She stood beside Adamas, she was perfect as he was, she was a part of him. But she was not altogether Adamas, for there were Jews among the Ophites and in every case the Mother had long been humbled before Zeus and before Dionysos. And to her in her turn was added another son. It was said that the First Man and the Second Man, "delighting in the beauty of the Spirit, shed their light upon her," so that she gave birth to

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the Third Man, named Christos. These four, a perfect three and one who was their child, were the highest heaven, the Pleroma or fullness of the godhead.

And by the mingling of this Divinity, this Perfect and Incorruptible Light, with the dark corruptibility of matter, our universe was made. The mingling came about by accident, the Ophites said, not by the will of the Pleroma; for the Pleroma, being perfect, could not will its own degrading. It seems that when the Father-and-Son shed their light upon the Spirit they shed too much. This excess of light became a being, Sophia, the Wisdom of God, and she was two-natured like Agdestis, like Phanes, like the Mind that Simon had said was born of Infinite Fire. But some said that Sophia was the true daughter of the Holy Spirit, brought forth from her left side while Christos issued from her right. However this may be, Sophia, the light of Adamas, fell from the most high and, falling, came into the waste of waters that lay below, the formless, bottomless night of matter. And she stirred and wakened it, even as the Spirit who brooded over the face of the deep had wakened life therein.

By Sophia's fall the first material world came into being, the sky-world that is above us. She, the Light, the Wisdom of Adamas, fashioned it from the body of waters that she had quickened; and she dwelt there, and it was called the Second Heaven or Heaven of Sophia. But many other falls, many further minglings of the incorruptible light and the corruptibility of matter were needed before our earth was made, with man and suffering and sin and woman. And there were many conflicts, even as there had been many conflicts in ancient times between the spirits of the day and of the night, between Zeus and the Titans, between

the attendants and the enemies of the child Dionysos; even as Philo had said that there was conflict between good and evil and spirit and matter. For Sophia, of her two natures, bore a son, Ialdabaoth, and Ialdabaoth bore six others like himself who, with their sire, fashioned themselves homes out of matter, and living therein, formed yet another world, the seven-fold world or heaven of the planets. And the six rebelled against their father, so that Ialdabaoth was like the Jewish god against whom the evil angels fought, and like Kronos, who was so jealous of his children's strength that he devoured them, and like Zeus who warred against the Titans.

But Ialdabaoth contained within himself a measure of his mother's holy light. So it happened that when he, seeking vengeance, looked down into the blackness that still lay inert below, his Thought took life there and became another Son, another, final world. And this last son of Ialdabaoth was called Ophiomorphus, "serpent-shaped," for he was of our earth. He was its ruler, its soul, and the soul of the earth, the Earth-Mother's mate, was ever seen as a snake. The Zeus who had loved the maid Persephone was a snake, and Dionysos of the underworld was a snake, and the Good Demon was a snake.

Thus, because of the heavenly disputings and the anger of Ialdabaoth, our world received life. But indeed, from the rebellion of the planet-rulers onward, the Ophite story of creation, of the intermingling of the darkness and the light, is all of rage and strife and jealousy and vengeance. For after he had made Ophiomorphus, Ialdabaoth grew vain, and he defied the Most High, crying out that he alone was God and Father. And at this his mother, Sophia, was much

incensed against him and rebuked him and became his enemy, so that Ialdabaoth was again led to create, out of the foulness of matter, another being, namely man, that he might be justified before Sophia and before the Most High. It was said that the serpent counselled Ialdabaoth to do this work, and it was also said that when man was first shaped he was like Ophiomorphus, a monster that grovelled on its belly. But Ialdabaoth, in his heaven, lifted man up, and with the breath of life that he breathed into him, gave him of his own immortal, perfect light. So Adam lived, a fleshly vessel that had mind and desire in it and a share of the holy light. And either of this divinity that Ialdabaoth had given him, or through the power of Sophia, Ialdabaoth's enemy, Adam had wisdom likewise. For as he stood upright, he raised his head and offered praise, not to his maker but to the Father-and-Son. And Ialdabaoth once again was enraged and seized man and cast him down upon the earth. And in order that he might be altogether punished for his ingratitude, that he might never make of the divinity that was in him a way of happiness, a ladder leading back to the Most High, Ialdabaoth fashioned Eve out of Adam's desire and set her down beside her husband, naked, to steal his light away.

Now everything was conflict: hatred, envy, bitterness. For now the lowest had been reached, the Light had come with man into our world, it dwelt in the blackest depths of matter. And a new conflict was beginning, the conflict that was the way not of creation but of salvation, of the return of the Light to Heaven. Weak and naked man lived, and the light that was in him yearned for its home, which was the Father-and-Son. He feared and hated Ialdabaoth, who sought to

take his light away. And Ialdabaoth hated him. And Sophia was greatly wroth with her son, and even Ophiomorphus, who had been the friend and counsellor of Ialdabaoth, turned against his father and became the friend and counsellor of man. For while the Christian Fathers who preached against the Ophite heresy said that the Serpent was evil, the source of "forgetfulness and malice and jealousy and envy and death," the very embodiment of man's fleshly passions and their punishment, the Ophites loved Ophiomorphus, their world-soul, who had been Zeus and Dionysos, the consort of the Earth Mother, the god of the Great Mysteries. He was the life of the earth, the spirit of Nature. "All things are set under him," they said, "and he is good and contains all things within himself, as in the horn of the one-horned, whence beauty and bloom are freely given . . ." The Ophites saw every holy matter symbolically, spiritually, mystically. In this way they were able to reconcile many different things and to find truth in many different places. In this way, while believing, as they declared, in Christ, they could attend their ancient, native rites. For ours is the one truth, they said, and it does not matter at whose altar we bow down, so we know what is in our hearts.

Ophiomorphus, the soul of the earth, loved man and helped him. He gave Adam and Eve of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, to spite Ialdabaoth. But Sophia was the chief saviour of mankind. She was in great distress at the final descent of the light into the filth of matter; she sought ardently to save it and to return with it to Heaven. Always she combated Ialdabaoth, and when he sent the Flood she saved Noah, and when he made the Law and bade the Jews

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follow it, she gave the prophets foreknowledge of the Christ. And lastly she brought about the birth of Jesus. Weeping, she cried out to her mother, the First Woman, the Holy Spirit, bewailing her fall and the discord that was upon the earth. And the Holy Spirit took pity on her and bade Christos, her son, go down on earth, to redeem the holy light, and he did so. And as he passed downward through the seven planet worlds, much of their light was attracted to him, so that it was rescued from matter. And when he reached Sophia he clothed her in the light that had been hers and that he had saved, and the two rejoiced greatly. This meeting of Christos and Sophia, of the brother and the sister, children of the Holy Three, the Ophites called "the meeting of the bridegroom and the bride."

Being come upon the earth, Christos, united with Sophia, entered into the body of Jesus. For the Ophites did not believe that the Son of the Holy Three was incarnate in the son of Mary. Jesus was the best and purest, the wisest and most just of men. Sophia had shaped him and his mother in readiness for Christos. Yet he remained a man. Christos came into him at his baptism and left him before his death, which was the work of Ialdabaoth and his wicked angels and was wrought by them in vengeance for the light that they had lost, and in terror lest, through the presence of Christos on the earth, man and all the holy light would presently be saved. When Jesus died, Christos and Sophia mounted to heaven. But the son of Mary rose again, and power was given to him from Christos and he dwelt on earth for many months, instructing his disciples in the Gnosis, the true wisdom, which was the way of salvation. This way, the return of the soul and its divine light to heaven, held more than the

Christian way of faith and works. It is said that the Ophites lived pure lives, eschewing greed and fornication and every wickedness that would prolong the power of matter and keep their souls from the Most High. But their wisdom taught also many magical things, secret words that the soul, as it travelled upward from world to world, must speak to each world's spirit lord or guardian, secret incantations like those that gave the Orphic the goodwill of the death goddess, secret acts akin to the ancient mysteries.

The later Christians condemned the Ophites utterly. Yet even in the days when the Catholic Church was well established in power of numbers and authority of doctrine, Christians who were not held to be heretical sometimes spoke as the Ophites spoke. "Ineffable Bythos!" sang the bishop Synesius, and again: "What is it lawful to call thee? Male thou art and female. Voice and silence. Nature begotten of Nature. Thou the King, the Æon of Æons." And in yet another place he says that it is with dancing that the "initiated mind" celebrates its unnameable god. Nevertheless, by the end of the third century, after the birth of Jesus, all beliefs were termed heresies that denied what the Church doctors now taught in Alexandria: that the Christ Jesus, who was the Logos, the Son of God, co-equal with the Father, was perfect man and perfect God. Of such forbidden heresies was the Ophite belief that the body of Jesus, which had died upon the Cross, was a human body, emptied of the Heavenly Christos that had dwelt in it for a while. For God could not die. It seems that while the men of those days could understand without difficulty that Christ was of Heaven, they found it harder to accept that he was also of the earth. These teachings and others akin to them, called

Gnostic, grew all about the Catholic Church. At first they had seemed a part of her; now they were seen clearly as her enemies. Soon she was to rise altogether above them, and they, weaklings in the shade of a great tree, were to droop and wither.

The Ophites said that in their three-fold god one element was female; in Egypt, among the heathen, Isis still reigned with Serapis and Horus, a holy trinity. Meanwhile, in most lands, woman was become a foolish or an evil thing. She was the temptress who had brought sin into the world; she was the ally of the earthy powers who, through her love, which was lechery and darkness, strove to steal man's light away. Yet the common people could not forget that woman had been holy. As the figure of Jesus was lifted up from contact with the vulgar, as the gentle Son of Man became ever more remote as Son of God, as Logos, co-equal with the Father, and as the First Woman vanished before the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the simple folk of Asia and of Egypt began to dream of another woman who was the mother Mary.

CHAPTER I

In the two hundred and eighty-first year after the birth of Jesus, a girlchild was born in Tyana in Cappadocia to a certain Christian merchant and his wife. They called her Marah, which means bitterness. Two years later the merchant died, and his widow, being still young, took a second husband and went with him to live in his native town, which was Smyrna in Lydia. But she left Marah in the charge of another merchant, her brother, and his wife, for she promised herself many other children by her new man, and it was not wise, she said, to give boys and girls a companion who was not fully of their blood, or to a father a daughter that was not his own.

So Marah remained in Tyana. Her uncle was a trafficker in many goods, silks and woollen stuffs and pearls, everything that came out of Arabia and Syria and Babylon and India save those things, frankincense and carved images and the like, that were used in the ceremonies of the heathen. These he would not sell. He was a deacon of the Church. His leisure hours he spent copying the Scriptures; and because Marah was quick and docile in such matters, he set her also, when she was old enough, to writing out the holy books. With the maid-servants she cleaned the rooms and prepared the food. And sometimes she worked in the counting-house, among the tallies that spoke of her uncle's wealth and of the wealth that he gave to the poor, for it is written: "If thou hast money thou shalt give it with thy hand as a ransom for thy sins." Except in his charities, the merchant spent little. His

house was small, his servants few. His faith required no great sums such as the heathen squandered each year in wreaths and offerings to their gods, in attendance at the city games and festivals, the theatre's shows. Because of their frugality, the Christian traders of those days were often among the richest Roman citizens.

Of all his fellows in Tyana the merchant was the most excellent in his love of Christ and in his works. Always the words were on his lips of the Teachings that the Lord Jesus gave to the Gentiles through his Apostles. If his wife murmured he would say: "Be not wrathful, for wrath leadeth to murder." And if a serving-maid were over-bold: "Be not given to raising thine eyes, for from these things adulteries come." And to Marah, if, as a little child, she concealed the truth: "Be not a liar, for a lie leadeth to theft." At other times he would quote other passages of the Teachings, saying how Christians must not hate, nor be double-minded or double-tongued, nor greedy, nor ill-natured, nor fornicating, nor proud, nor given to witchcraft or the making of philtres; how they must not be seducers of boys nor procurers of abortion nor slayers of little children when they were born. And in his own life he obeyed these words, which were the words of the most ancient congregations, scrupulously; his faith was of the older sort, scarcely touched by philosophic speculation. With him and with her aunt, Marah went to the meetings of the Church. Living and working in this way she had few hours in which to play at ball or at any child's game, or to wander in the meadows that were about Tyana. On certain days throughout the year, her mother sent money from Smyrna and letters praying that the child should continue dutiful and happy. And, in fact, Marah was

well content. Although her shoulders were a trifle rounded from bending over books, she was strong and comely and her conscience gave her good sleep.

When she was fifteen years of age the Cæsar Galerius, going to war against the Parthians, began to persecute the Christian people. Diocletian was Emperor of the East at that time and Maximian ruled in the West with his Cæsar Constantius, whose son's name was Constantine. Some say that of every five Roman citizens in the Eastern lands, one worshipped the risen Christ in those days; others say that half the people were of the new faith. There were Christian knights and magistrates, scribes, lawyers, governors. The wife of Diocletian, in his fine palace of Nicomedia, was a Christian, and so was his daughter Valeria, the wife of Galerius. Yet Galerius hated the followers of Jesus, and all along his road and in the neighbouring villages and cities the blood of martyrs flowed freely. And so it happened, one day in Tyana, that Marah's uncle was taken by the heathen. He was opening his shop, one of the largest in the market, when the officers of the town came to him and bade him do as all Roman merchants should and sacrifice to the State's gods before proceeding with his business. "I will not sacrifice," he said. "I am a Christian." Seeing the officers come into the shop, Marah, who was there also, had slipped back and hidden herself behind a bale of goods. Now she peeped out, trembling, and watched her uncle's face and the faces of the men, which were not unkindly. And she heard them speak again, urging the merchant to go with them to the altar that was in the market-place, telling him how the smallest morsel of the sacrificial meat, the tiniest pinch of incense, would save him from torture, from death.

"Think of your wife," the chief of them said, "and of your great wealth and of your power in our city." But the merchant lifted up his head. He was a small man, no longer young. His grey beard straggled, his large nose was rheumy. "I think but of the love of God who died for me," he said, "and of the treasure laid up in heaven."

So they took him. For many days, during which the magistrates tried by argument and threats and torture to persuade him to recant, Marah visited her uncle in his prison. The pain that he endured and the passion that was in his heart gave his face a thin look, as though already its earthiness was gone from it. His words were strangely gentle. As she passed in, carrying food for him, lint and water to wash his wounds, and as she passed out again after she had kissed him, Marah thought: "If they ask me, I too will say 'I am a Christian.'" But no one heeded her. After the merchant's death the persecution became more fierce. Hitherto the city had remained quiet enough; few voices had been raised in protest or in praise. But now the heathen grew hotter in their denunciations. And many men and women rose up of themselves, in the market-place and in the law-courts, in the fields, the schools, the workshops, traders and scholars and artisans, young boys and matrons, old men and virgins, and cried suddenly: "I am a Christian!" The magistrates and their officers lost patience. They tortured and burnt hastily, to please Galerius and to be rid of the agitation. Marah trembled whenever she moved abroad, in dread of the horrid cries that she might hear and the sights that she might see and the terror and exaltation that were in her own blood.

Her aunt was in great fear and great distress. Upon

her husband's death she had taken refuge with Marah in a friend's house. The magistrates had seized the dead man's house and his estate; all that the widow had were certain bills for monies owed that she had plucked out of the merchant's coffers, and a little gold. She had not dared take much in her flight, lest the officers of the law should suspect and so pursue her. And in any case the immense store that she had hoped to find was not there, so truly had the merchant obeyed his Master and given his substance to the poor. She spent her time devising plans whereby the debts might be paid to her, and how she could obtain again a considerable sum that her husband had lately bestowed upon the Church, for distribution among the persecuted. "Aï! Aï!" she wept. "Now I am old and poor and abandoned. I who have given so much must wait on charity. What can a woman do without a man and without gold?"

She seldom left the house, even to pray among her fellows, even to pursue her business. She had not fetched the martyr's body from the prison, as widows did wherever the magistrates permitted, to wrap it in spices and to bury it. She had no word of condemnation for those Christians who hid themselves, ashamed, or who, in the presence of the judges, denied their love of Christ. On the day of her husband's death she had bought a little clay image and had concealed it in her chamber. It was the image of a woman and it held a child in its arms, so that it looked like the Eastern Artemis, the ancient Mother Goddess of those lands, and like the Mother of Jesus. Already a number of Christians, women especially, entertained a deep reverence for her whom the Alexandrian Church doctors called the God-bearer. Marah herself had a particular

love for her. Every night she prayed, after her other prayers: "Mother of love, give me your help. Mother of mercy, pity me." She pictured her as a woman, pale with large, dark eyes, and as a vagueness, vast as the night sky, whose arms were wrapped about the world.

In order to preserve the store of money that she was gathering, and that promised, at the last, not to be so inconsiderable, the widow looked for a new way of living. She was in correspondence with a Christian man and his wife, farmers in the neighbourhood of the city; and presently it was agreed that these people would take her and Marah into their household and lodge and feed them in exchange for work that they would do in the orchards and kitchens. The money that Marah's mother sent would make a portion for the child, the widow said, against her marriage. But it happened, just at that time, that this money, which was due, did not come from Smyrna. Instead there was a letter saying that Marah's mother had also lost her husband and was in great straits, without money and with three little children. And when the farmer's wife heard this she took back the word that she had given and refused to lodge Marah in her house. She would not have a dowerless girl, she said, where there were young sons, boys that any pretty face would lead into temptation. And Marah blushed and wept, thinking of the youths whom she would have liked to see, and of the farm whose trees and streams called to her in the dust and noise and fears of the city, and of her uncle who had died. She remembered her aunt's lamentations. "O Compassionate," she prayed that night. "Beg of your son to give me a kind husband quickly." But the widow was angry. "The girl's way is plain," she told the farmer's wife. "She must go

to her mother. It is her duty to work and help with the young children." And so it was arranged that Marah should travel at once to Smyrna. The merchants of a caravan consented to carry her without charge, for love of her dead uncle. One of their wives, a woman named Ruth, promised to watch over her virginity.

In the early morning, when all was quiet, Marah went with the caravan from Tyana. She rode in a bullock-cart among the merchandise, beside the woman Ruth and the other women of the company. She watched the men upon the mules and horses, the pale sky, the unfamiliar trees and pastures. She stretched her narrow shoulders and drew back her veil a little and snuffed the air. It, too, was unfamiliar, smelling of earth and new grasses, for the winter was just past. And as she breathed it she forgot Tyana and her uncle and the terrors and exaltations of the persecution and the uncertainty towards which she travelled. A young Syrian rode on the foremost horse. His eyes were very dark; he wore a bunch of small flowers behind each ear. But after a while Ruth bade Marah shift her place so that she could not see him. Here and there upon the road were other travellers. Christians, flying from the persecution, hurried along, carrying children and great bundles. A band of heathen dancers passed, on foot, on donkeys, servants of Bacchus the Vine Dionysos, who motioned obscenely with their hands and shouted bawdiness. One of them was so fat, a true Silenus, swaying and quivering like a full wine-skin on his donkey, that Marah would have laughed. But she dared not. Soldiers in torn coats and bloody bandages, returning westward from the war, asked to be carried in the wagons. Companies of other soldiers, their weapons bright in the sunshine, galloped eastward.

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At night the merchants put up their tents, made shelters of the carts and coverings. Fires were lit and hampers of food spread out. The women sat apart. They ate and talked quietly. Every now and then one bent forward to offer another some choice morsel. But the men, when they had eaten and drunk, grew noisy. They sang hymns and canticles, lifting their voices boldly about the fires, in the safe solitude. Amid loud laughter, a lamed soldier whom they had taken from the road because he was a Christian, imitated the sounds that birds make, the screaming of peacocks, the gobbling of turkeys, the clap-clap of ducks eating in muddy water. He sang a marching song, and the others knocked their cups together and roared in chorus. Then some one played upon the flute. After the din the music rose smooth and secret as a stream that bubbles from the earth. Marah tried to see who was the player, but from the distance where she sat she could make out no face clearly, about the jumping flames. She wondered why she felt so stirred, so restless in the peaceful night, so eager where there was no cause for eagerness. She drew long breaths, but they brought her no ease.

The next morning, going with her pitcher to a stream that was near the encampment, she saw the young Syrian. He was watering his horses. And though her mind said: "It is a sin," she looked at him as she rose from dipping the pitcher, and he smiled, whereat she smiled also and blushed so red that what was in her heart was instantly made plain. But she thought: "What is he thinking?" He was a very young man. The hair on his face was soft; his teeth were white as he smiled at her. "What is your name?" he asked, and she told him. After that Marah did not wonder at

her new eagerness, her stirring, her sighs. At night, when she lay and thought of the young Syrian, a heaviness ached in her breast. She prayed: "O Lord Jesus. Give him to me as my husband." Watching him upon his horse by day she trembled secretly. Strange fancies kindled in her. She longed to do him some unknown violence, actually to break with her hands into his sealed, silent body, that was so far from hers. She wished that he was very small, no bigger than a new-born child, and that she could wrap herself all about him. And the great hills, the black, disquieting night were lovely to her for his sake; the scent of leaves and flowers, the bright water that ran through her fingers filled her with delight because he was near.

One evening a storm of lightning and of thunder surprised the travellers. They were in a valley, and at the first thunder-clap the leader of the caravan drew the wagons from the road and brought them for protection to the mountain side, among the rocks' crevices and hollows. The men hurried to and fro, hauling the carts, tethering and hobbling the beasts, lest terror should lead them into mischief. And the women did what they could also, crying loudly meanwhile upon the Lord and upon the mother of God to save them from lightning and from the earthquake that might come, for such things were frequent in those countries, and from the strong rains that were common also. But Marah caught sight of a manner of cave, a little apart from where the others gathered, and ran to it and climbed in quickly. As the darkness fell the storm became more terrible. The unceasing thunder jumped from hill to hill, the lightning flashed here, flashed there, so that now the peaks shone white as new silver

against the black night and now they leapt up jet-black against a silver sky. Marah was very much afraid. Yet she dared not leave her shelter. Chill and stinging, the rain had begun to fall.

And while she lay shivering with fear and cold, the young Syrian climbed into the cave. It seemed that he had not known that she was there. For a moment he stood astonished; a flash of lightning showed her his puzzled, wondering face as he half-turned his head, hesitating. But he did not go away. He lay down beside her. And Marah made no movement, she was so astounded and so happy. He touched her hand. "You are cold," he said, and pulling at the sheep-skin cloak he wore, he spread it over her shoulders so that they were both enclosed in the warmth and in the acrid smells of the hide and of his body. He put his arm about her and held her, but not tightly.

So they rested while the storm raged and the rain poured. Marah was no longer afraid. She did not think of the storm or of sin or danger or any disturbing matter. And though she was so certain that she loved him, she did not think, then, of any further venture. She was content to lie thus, to feel his arm about her and to hear his voice every now and then, beneath the thunder's noise. He spoke little; he said no word of love. Presently he drew her to him. "Are you a virgin?" he asked, and she said, "Yes;" whereupon his grip slackened, perhaps because he was a man who honoured innocence, a Christian who feared sin, or because his blood remembered the ancient danger that was in new women. "You are so gentle," he said, as though speaking to himself, and again they lay quietly, and again Marah was altogether happy. At the last, when the storm dropped and he rose and lifted her up

to lead her back to her companions, he kissed her suddenly. She was glad of his kiss and of his promise: "I will come for you in Smyrna."

But the next day and during many further days and nights, she was not happy. Upon her return to the wagons Ruth and the other women had set up a great outcry. They swore that she had given her virginity to the young Syrian, that she was disgraced before them and before the whole Church of Christ. Marah, hanging her head, said no, she was still a maid; but even after Ruth, for her duty's sake, she said, had visited the girl and found that in fact she spoke the truth, the clamour did not altogether abate. Marah was evil, the woman declared, lustful, shameless. From that moment she became a prisoner in the crowded carts, in the tent where she slept beside Ruth and the other matrons. Seeing herself thus condemned, thus punished, she came to feel, almost, that she had sinned. And when by chance, as they journeyed on, the young Syrian's eyes met hers, his look was not bold or comforting but wistful, as though she were some green garden whose freshness he had coveted but that he no longer sought to enter. Daily, as the caravan left the hills, made its way through the green valley where the river shone and the little lilies and the purple saffron flowers grew, Marah's heart grew heavier. Her blood was quiet now; she ached, but not with pleasure. Each night she prayed: "Queen of Heaven. Bring him to me again." But he gave no sign, and when at last they had reached the city and Marah waited in the Christian hostelry where she and Ruth and many of the travellers lay, he did not come.

And now other matters troubled her. She had travelled to Smyrna to seek her mother, to live with

her. But her mother was not in the city. It seemed that she had gone into the hills with a new husband whom she had taken directly her last man had died. Her children she had left to the care of the Christian community, which was unusually large and unusually rich in Smyrna, owing to the many Jews who had gone there in older times. So it happened that Marah lay very anxiously in the little room that Ruth and her husband had hired in the hostelry. Throughout the days she remained alone. Ruth was busy visiting her friends and making ready for her return to Tyana, and she had said that though she would continue to care for the girl, for the love of Christ, while she was in Smyrna, she would not guard such shamelessness through the crowded streets. Soon the merchants' business would be over and Ruth gone. Soon she would be altogether alone, Marah thought—a servant in the hostelry or, if she were fortunate, in some charitable Christian home.

And so it happened that on the day when Ruth said to her: "There is a man called Barus who is looking for a wife. Perhaps he will have you," Marah bowed her head meekly. The young Syrian seemed very far from her now. The journey and her love had become remote, almost unreal, like things dreamed or known in farthest childhood. In the small dark room that smelt of kitchens and stale linen, she could scarcely believe that she had ever been among trees and bright water and flowers and that her body had stretched towards them, as though they were a part of love. Barus was a trader in wood; he had a big warehouse by the harbour. He had known her uncle, Ruth said, and for this reason would take Marah in preference to some rich man's daughter, if her looks were favour-

able. He was not poor, he was not ugly. At the house of a merchant, his friend and Ruth's, Marah was shown to him, and she knew, as soon as his eyes fell on her, that he found her pleasing. He was not over forty years of age. Yet to her he seemed as old as her dead uncle. He took her hands and looked long into her face. "I will cherish you," he said, "as our Lord cherishes his Church." Alone on the eve of her wedding, Marah wept and prayed: "Mother of God. Make me a good and faithful wife to Barus."

CHAPTER II

For the first two years of her marriage Marah had no children. She lived and worked happily enough in the fine house that her husband owned on the slopes of the acropolis, overlooking the city and the hills and the little river that Homer had loved, they say, and the harbour where Barus had his warehouse and his offices, beside the blue gulf of Smyrna. Yet in her childlessness she was not happy. Barus tried to comfort her. "You are young," he said. "You will be a mother soon enough." He himself was not distressed. Although marriage was only for procreation, the priests said, there was no sin in its enjoyment where Heaven and not a human act withheld issue. But Marah wept. If she clasped a child, her body ached; even the touch of the young animals, the kids and lambs that she fondled sometimes in the meadows beside the rivers, wakened a longing in her breasts. She took no pleasure in her husband's bed; the love she gave him was the reverence that a Christian wife owed to him who was the earthly symbol of her Lord. And it is written: "Thou shalt not hate any one; but some thou shalt convince, and to some thou shalt give way, and others thou shalt love above thine own life." Those whom she must love above her own life would be her children, she thought.

In this also Barus was content. He was happy in her submission, her yielding. He asked no greater warmth, for while he said, remembering Eve, that women were an evil, a temptation, the original source

of the grossness that was in man, he said also that women should be without that grossness, vessels of purity and forbearance. As for him, he loved his wife. He had been taught: "If thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord thou shalt be perfect. But if not, do what thou canst." And though he held it to be the best and holiest, he had never sought to walk in the way of uttermost perfection, which was more and more in those days the way of chastity. Each year the Christian ideal became more austere. Each year more men and women fled into the Egyptian and the Syrian deserts, there to serve God in prayer and humiliation and abstinence. Marriage was a falling-off, not condemned yet having little honour. Virginity was the highest state. In certain places it was being said, now, that Mary the God-bearer had been a virgin, that Jesus had been stainlessly begotten by the Holy Spirit, the Dove.

Pondering her own life and the life of Mary, whom she loved, Marah wondered would she be happier if she were as the Holy Mother had been, a virgin in the house of her husband Joseph. She dreamed, too, of the eremitic life, and how, in her Lybian hut, she would have disposed her solitary bed this way or that, set her wooden table and her water-jug and bowl, read her holy books with no man to say her yea or nay. But these solitudes were not possible. She prayed for children to ease the craving of her body, to bring sweet comfort to her mind. Merely the business of caring for them would have soothed her, she thought. She begged her husband to allow her to adopt the little half-brothers and sisters whom her mother had left in Smyrna. But Barus would not.

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So her only hope was in Heaven. Often she visited the tomb of the holy saint and martyr Polycarp, who had been Smyrna's bishop, who had spoken with the apostle John. She pressed her hands upon the stone, praying that by the saint's intercession she might have a child. From the terrace of her house she watched the heathen go in procession along their chief street, to seek fertility and every blessedness at the temple of Cybele, their patron goddess, on her hill outside the city. Their dancing and their songs, their peculiar gestures did not astonish her. Almost she was tempted to go to the cave whence the river Meles sprang and bathe in its fountains; it was said that a Christian convert, despite the nymphs whose ancient evil haunted the cave, had obtained a son from the clear waters. Once, by the harbour, a sailor offered to sell her a very rare talisman, the magic egg that the Druids of Gaul and Britain worshipped, he said, and that was made by serpents dancing by night in a secret place. She stared, she hesitated before the white, rounded object and its strange markings that were indeed the outward signs of womanhood and child-bearing. Sometimes in the market she watched the heathen beggars spin and scream and gash themselves with knives, and wondered would she buy one of the little images that they sold, after their wild dances, to wear upon her belly. But such things were of Cybele, the demon, or of the Egyptian Isis whose blue veil was the sky, the sea, or of Atargatis, whom the Syrians called the maiden goddess, or of the Ephesian Artemis, all demons. It is written: "Be not given to charms or astrology or lustrations, for from these things idolatry proceedeth." And Barus would discover the image, she told herself, when at night they lay naked together. He was a

strict Christian, stricter, even, in his words and his observances, than her uncle had been.

But when she was seventeen she conceived, and in the following winter brought forth her first child, a son. They called him Georgius, "farmer," for "I will make him a strong labourer in the fields of virtue," Barus said. "He shall gather a mighty harvest for the Lord." Barus was already determined upon the manner of the boy's education and upon his future. He was to be a doctor of the Church. "I have given my life to the things of this world," Barus said, "that my children might benefit. My sons I will give to God." Thereafter Marah was very happy, nursing and tending Georgius and the other children that were born to her, year by year; two daughters, Agatha and Katerina, and another son, Stephanus. A twin of her second daughter had died, and she mourned it as grievously as though no babies crawled about her feet in the women's place and in the kitchens, beneath the closed garden's vines and jasmines, over the black and white pebbles of the courtyard where the waters of the well shone, far down. Barus reproved her foolishness. "'The troubles that befall thee receive as good things,' " he said, "'knowing that nothing happeneth without God.'" Presently her tears ceased. She kissed her remaining children the more warmly. At that time she enjoyed all the delights that she had foreseen. To hold a creature so small that her lap and arms could utterly contain it, to feel that it was part of her, seemed to ease not only her body but some itch that was in her mind. She loved Barus better in those days; she felt a gratitude towards him. Yet, still, his constant kisses wakened no tremor in her blood, not a ripple of the wave that one kiss had stirred, among the hills

of Phrygia. From time to time the image of the young Syrian returned to her. Sometimes, not often, she saw him in her sleep, and though the vision was painful, for always he turned away or walked on the further side of the road, unheeding, she welcomed it. The dream came to her most commonly when Barus was angry, when he reproved her for some carelessness in the ordering of her house or for what he called her excessive indulgence of her sons. "Do with the girls as you please," he was wont to say, "so you keep them innocent and pious. But the boys must not be weakened. They must be stern as they are chaste, firm of soul, true warriors of the Lord." Because her dream of the young Syrian had visited her about the time of her second son's conception she told herself that it brought male children.

For the rest she lived the life of every Christian matron. Punctually she went with Barus to the evening love-feasts and on the morning of the Christian Sabbath to the yet holier gatherings, there to confess her sins and to hear the good words and to eat the holy bread and drink the holy draught in memory of her Lord and of that last supper that he had eaten. She visited the sick, ministered to the hungry. Often the brethren of Smyrna met in their house, singing hymns and speaking virtuously; sometimes the holy men of other communities, priests, doctors, bishops even, spent one or two days in Barus' company, and she served them as Martha had served Jesus. On these occasions there was ever much discourse on Christian matters and on all matters that concerned the Church, her servants and her enemies, upon the Manichees against whom the Emperor Diocletian had lately issued a decree, and upon the heretics who, while

professing themselves Christians, said that not Jesus but a phantom had died upon the Cross, or that Jesus was not the Son of God but a man who, having become the Christos, the anointed of the Holy Spirit, had by the excellence of his works attained to unity with the One Father. In the mornings, when the holy men started again upon their journey, Marah kissed their hands and held up her two sons that they might put a blessing on them. Morning and night and at midday she prayed, begging for help and guidance in her weaving and her cooking, in the management of her maid-servants, asking that her husband's trade might continue to prosper, that the water of her well might not dry up, that sickness and pain and sorrow should not touch her children.

In the three hundred and third year after the birth of Jesus, while Marah was still suckling Stephanus, the Emperor Diocletian and his Cæsar Galerius decreed that the Christian faith should be abolished. Marah was sitting in her chamber, sewing, when Barus brought her news of the notices that were posted in the city and of the dread judgments written thereon. He stood before her, his head a little bowed, and told her that in future all Christians who did not recant, did not sacrifice to the pagan gods, would be cut off from the Roman life, would cease to be full citizens, would lose their places and their honours, maybe see their goods, their homes, their wealth taken from them. Their churches were to be destroyed; already it was known that the church by the Emperor's palace in Nicomedia had been brought down. They were forbidden to assemble in any place whatever. "The foxes have holes!" cried Barus. "We shall be less than the wild dogs that any man may kill!" And though it

seemed as yet that not death but only torture was to be the price of disobedience, Marah was so filled with fear and horror that she did not weep. She knew the spirit of the brethren; she remembered her uncle's death. She went to Barus and laid her head upon his breast. Not knowing which way his mind was turned she did not speak.

Each morning after that, when he prepared to leave her and go into the town, she did the same, and Barus laid his hands on her in blessing. And because, all day, she went about the house with the one thought: "he will not come back," when in the evening he returned, still safe and still a Christian, she clasped him with a warmth she had not known before. Then, indeed, she would have wept, but at the first sign of tears Barus put her from him. He was very stern at that time. Often he lay chaste, he fasted where no fasts were ordained. In the evenings he sat silent, meditating. Yet sometimes he would take his four-year-old son upon his knee and look at him gravely and presently would begin to speak, exhorting the child to prayer and virtue and fortitude. "We suffer as our Lord suffered," he said. "We must be strong as he was." And Georgius would stare back as gravely, seeming to understand. For her part Marah played with the children and told them stories, tales of the child Jesus and how he was born in the cave at Bethlehem with the beasts snuffing beside, and how he refuted the doctors and how his mother Mary treasured all his words, they were so wise. And she told them tales also of the heathens' wickedness, of the demons that they worshipped, serpents, and men horned and shaggy-legged like goats, and female monsters that were more horrid even than the mother of Galerius, who devoured

infants, so it was said, and young men and maidens too, if she could catch them. The Cæsar's mother was high priestess of some wild Thracian cult. It was she, the people said, who, in her fanatic hatred, had brought her son to slaughtering the Christians.

For now a second edict had been proclaimed and blood and fire had come upon the Christian people. At the stake and on the racks the brethren were dying. Many had fled; many languished in prison. Seeing that Barus did not of himself seek martyrdom, Marah was a little comforted. Although he remained steadfast, the officers of the town had not seized him; with certain others of the Christian congregation he went about his business quietly. And there were no loud outcries in the city. In her house upon the hillside Marah could have dreamed that everything in the world was peaceful as the cool shadows of her rooms, as the flowers that blossomed in her closed garden. In the market, where she went with her maids to buy food and oil, she was not molested. Yet she feared so terribly that she could scarcely utter her prayers when she and Barus knelt among their fellows, or gathered them, in defiance of the law, in their own house. Barus' home was become one of the chief meeting-places of the faithful. He himself offered the prayers; and the priests came there on the Lord's Days, carrying, strapped and concealed beneath their clothes, the holy books that Diocletian had bidden them surrender. Once, in the night, a priest of a neighbouring church visited the house alone. Marah thought that he carried a bundle. But Barus said: "Go, woman. Hide yourself. This matter is not for you." In fear and curiosity she peeped out as her husband and his visitor went into the garden. And in

the half-darkness she saw them dig among the roots of the fig-tree and lift the earth and conceal some object in it. A little shining showed her a metal box, and she guessed that what Barus and the priest had buried were the holy scriptures. Wrapped in his cloak, the priest slipped presently away. To know that the condemned and sacred books were hidden in her garden at times made Marah more afraid; at other times their presence gave her new pride, new courage, as though some living holiness were in her keeping.

Thus in fear and exultation, in hope and abasement, in heedlessness also and ease and sometimes laughter, Marah lived through those years. The rigours of the persecution increased, lessened, ceased, began again. Death and suffering were constantly about her. With the other Christian women she took food and clothing to the prisons, saw the martyrs' torn bodies, heard their joyful words. She shuddered at the tales that travellers told, of a whole congregation burned in its church in Phrygia, of free men blinded in one eye, their limbs mangled, sent to work in the mines of Palestine and Egypt, of young boys and girls running to martyrdom. She wept with pride before the valiance of the saints whose graves were holy places, whose relics wrought miracles; she sighed in sorrow for those whose courage was not great enough. For in that persecution many lapsed from their faith, turned in their terror from the love of Jesus and the promise of Heaven. Besides her care of the victims, charity still bade her tend the sick and feed the hungry, comfort the widows and the orphans.

Yet after her most Christian work was done she must needs cook and sew and wash her linen on the stones, with her maids. When Barus was not by she

talked and smiled with them. And now Georgius could read and write, and she could not keep herself from laughing, secretly, to see how he aped his father's serious look. And Agatha was growing so like herself that it was a wonder to look in deep water or to hold up a shining dish—there were no mirrors in her house—and to compare the two faces side by side. And Katerina could sing the hymns without fault and Stephanus could run and play most sturdily. These things gave Marah pleasure. Of the girls Katerina was her father's favourite. He loved her next to Georgius, as Marah knew, although he did not speak of his preference or indeed of his concern for anything save his sons' virtue.

But Marah loved Stephanus. Merely to see him eat, to see him sleep or smile, gave her incalculable joy. One by one she had watched her children go out of her arms, and though they still gathered about her, still ran to her for this or that—even Georgius whom Barus was making stern as himself—it seemed to her that every moment took them further away. She gazed at their smooth bodies, at their looks that were solemn or laughing or angry or grieved or curious, according to the moment, and was astonished. She felt that in their souls that she could not see, that she could not be sure, ever, of understanding, they were become strangers. And since she loved him best, the sense of strangeness, of separation, was most frequent and most painful with Stephanus. She longed to draw him back to infancy and her breasts, and she longed to push him forward into the years when thought would break his childish smoothness and she might ask of him perhaps: "What are you feeling? What are you thinking?"

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE TREE

With the passing of time her love grew. She gave birth to other children but they died. And now she did not mourn so much. In her own mind Stephanus remained her last-born, her best-beloved, although, throughout the years, she hid her passion, because of her husband's words, and because she loved all her children and would not cause them pain, and because justice, which was a Christian virtue, bade her show no preference. And the sense that he was travelling away from her gave her increasing sorrow. Now, with Georgius, he was in the teachers' hands. He too, Barus said, was to be a man of books as well as of piety, a doctor of the Church. She could but feed him, make and mend his clothes, nurse him in sickness. Thought was in his face, a less comfortable thought, as she could see, than that which made Georgius their master's aptest pupil. But she dared not question him as she had once hoped to do; she dared not seek, even, to approach his impenetrable soul. The wonder that she craved seemed most unattainable with him, the miracle whereby her soul and her children's would be as one soul, not after death in Heaven but now in the stresses and dangers and the warm joys of life. She turned to her daughters. Because they were female she thought that maybe, through her love, she might know them more closely, might live, if only a little, dimly, in their lives.

CHAPTER III

Her daughters shared all Marah's work. Beside her worn fingers their smooth fingers wove and sewed in the white-washed rooms; beside her plump arms their thin arms beat the linen on the river's stones, with the gossiping maid-servants. And they too, hurried through the town—in the sun's heat or in the harsh north wind that the mountains flung down on Smyrna, in the rain that dimmed the colours of the houses and made the low streets about the harbour marshy, in the delicious airs that stirred the blood, smelling of flowers and the sea—to bathe the sores or cool the fevers of the sick, to carry food or comfort to the poor or to the persecuted. So they, like Marah, went from brightness to the foul dark of hovels and of prisons; they looked as she did upon happy, laughing faces and upon faces that the fear of death made horrible or that mirrored in agony and ecstasy the promise of Heaven.

Marah knew that Katerina was the more moved by these awful, holy sights. Agatha stared, shrank a little. But behind Katerina's large dark eyes that were surely as lovely, Marah thought, as the eyes of the Mother of God herself, strange shadows passed. She knelt before the prisoners, kissed their wounds with greatest fervour. And returning through the lively streets she kept a withdrawn, rapt look, so that Marah knew that her heart was held in contemplation of suffering and of the death that was true life. Her thoughts dwelt constantly upon these dark mysteries. Dreams visited her that she told to her mother and to Barus, visions

of the dying Christ, of the scourging and the spear-thrust and the Cross. More than the Mother whom Marah loved, she loved the Son who had come into sin and death, who had become the Curse itself, that men should be saved from sin and death and everlasting cursing. She prayed, she fasted very strictly. Throughout her early years her mother had feared that she would do as many children had done and fling herself, of a sudden, into martyrdom. But Katerina obeyed her father and the Church, whose love bade no man seek of his own will to snatch the martyr's crown. And now the persecution was lessening in those lands. Galerius, dying in horrid anguish, had granted the Christians freedom, and though the new Emperor, Maximinius, still pursued them, the followers of Jesus were rising up again. Defiant and hopeful, they looked no longer towards death but towards conquest.

Katerina carried herself modestly, even fearfully, and as she came to her twelfth year and womanhood her bashfulness increased. Walking by the obscene images that were in the town she drew her veil closer; near the gymnasium she turned her head away from the youths who ran by, naked and shining. She blushed and was ashamed when the pagans cried at her and Agatha as they passed, calling out blessings on Marah for mothering such a likely pair and on Great Cybele who had given the world women and love. And again in the evenings, when she listened to her father's praise of the holy men and women, of virtue, chastity, virginity, a passion stirred in her dark eyes. She was more eager in her piety, Marah thought, than Georgius, who heard his father's words gravely and somewhat shyly, for he confessed to temptations of the flesh, than

Stephanus who often fretted, itching to be away with his books, that were the pagan school-books in which he learned his grammar but that he loved nevertheless. The boy had a particular admiration for Homer. Whenever he could he slipped down to the meadows, to walk beside the river, to lie dreaming in the cave where the poet had walked and dreamed, they said, composing his tales of fighting and adventure and the pagan gods. The younger girl was more pious than her sister. Agatha sat quietly while her father talked. She seemed to draw a veil close about her, as Katerina did in the streets. Her mother wondered was she seeing in her mind's eye the beauties for which Smyrna was famous, or the muscly, sweating players, or the sea that Marah had grown to love and whose breath the girls always sniffed as they drew near the harbour, like a beast that scents a lover or a prey?

In the summer of that year Barus and Marah and their children went one night, with others of the Christian congregation, to the cemetery, beyond the walls of the city. It was the Christian habit to assemble in this way among the tombs, to commemorate the martyrs who slept there, to praise them and their holiness, that had conquered death. Sometimes also the people visited the chapels that were consecrated to the patriarchs of old and the apostles and the mighty archangels whose intercession they sought, whose feast-days they kept very reverently. But especially they loved their martyrs' burial places. The graves and the ground about them were their own; the pagans held them sacred, for a corpse was ever a fearful thing, holy and dangerous. But of late the Emperor Maximinus had forbidden such meetings. And so it happened on this autumn night that the people who

gathered in the darkness were not many. They walked discreetly, little group by little group; the candles and the spices that they carried were hidden beneath their cloaks; their baskets of food and wine were small; going towards the sacred places they raised no noisy chants.

Marah was very weary. She was with child, and for a long while now her pregnancies had made her weakly. As they came into the antechamber of the largest tomb the many odours sickened her, the smell of the spices with which the dead were wrapped in their closed chambers, the smell of stale wax and the smell of food and of the fresh spices and the faint smell of corruption. She shivered, asking herself if she had sinned, if an evil spirit had entered into her that the ghostly presences received her so. And the dangers that threatened, the thought of discovery and punishment, darkened her mind. But new lights were lit; the water that washed her hands and lips, purifying her for the feast, was cool and soothing. And the people began to move here and there. It seemed that they were not afraid: the holy dead protected them. Katerina breathed the scents, her lips half-open, her eyes closed. Agatha looked quickly around; and following the girl's glance, Marah saw that it came to rest upon a young man who was one of Barus' servants, a clerk in his warehouse. The youth stood half-hidden in the shadows; his eyes were fixed on Agatha. And a great sadness and a great eagerness arose together in Marah's heart. She forgot her fears, her discomfort. She saw again the great road on which she had travelled seventeen years before, the trees and the pastures and the young Syrian. "Mother of love," she prayed. "Let my daughter's love be happy."

The candles that the women had lit before the martyrs' tombs burned clear in the heavy air, true images of those living souls that had risen into the great light of Heaven. The vault hummed with murmuring voices. Marah and all the people bowed and rose and bowed again, celebrating with the movements of their bodies and the words of their lips the triumph of eternal life, through death. They kissed the grave-stones, smeared them with balsam, pressed their hands close to the hidden holiness. So the glory of the slain flowed into them; their souls shared in the death that had given life, even as Christ's death had given life; their hearts looked through the darkness of pain and the shadows of the grave to the lovely garden where the saints stood before the Lord Jesus and he stroked their faces and said to them "Go and play." Perhaps because she dreamed of her daughter's human love and because love, to her, was ever linked with the smell and sight of pleasant places, the visions that she had of Heaven were very fair to Marah that night, fresh with green trees, bright with streams and flowers. She thought that she saw the face of the Lord Jesus. His likeness was that which the saint John and the blessed martyrs of Africa had seen—a young man whose hair was white like wool. And she saw the violets and the lilies and the rose trees that were tall as cypresses. And a great sweetness held her. Lying before the graves it seemed that a tenderness like a mother's tenderness wrapped her round and that the same tenderness went out of her. She closed her eyes the better to feel the embrace of that divine Holy Spirit towards whom her own spirit flowed and that united heaven and men and the earth and all the mysteries and beauties of the earth. "Praise be to

Thee, O Lord," she said, " who has made all fair and good things."

The chanting and the prayers ceased, and Marah rose and went with the other women to the place where they had left their baskets. Happily she laid out the wine, the meat and fruits and cakes of the love-feast, which was a funeral feast also, shared piously with the holy sleepers. So, she thought, would she presently, if God willed, be setting out cakes and wine for Agatha's betrothal. For though the young clerk was very poor, with Barus' consent they could soon be married. The older girl helped her. But Katerina, long after the others had risen, still lay prostrate, and when at last she left the graves and sat herself beside Barus and his party, her face wore a strange look, half ecstasy, half pain, so that Marah knew that she had dreamed rather of sadness and of suffering than of the splendours that were death's gifts. Her eyes were closed, she was still lost in her dark rapture, when the young man, Barus' clerk, whose name was Demetrius, came towards them. Before sitting down he kissed Barus and Marah and their sons, kissed Katerina, kissed Agatha. Marah was astonished that he should kiss the older girl last, which was not the usual order. But a sharp anxiety pierced her. For while Agatha, after she had returned the kiss, gave no sign of any kind, Katerina, whose lips had not moved, shuddered and opened her eyes and gazed at Demetrius as though she were invaded, suddenly, by a great delight. Then, as he sat back, her glance went slowly from him to her sister.

And Marah's joy was gone, her visions of heavenly peace and the wonder of the Holy Spirit enfolding her spirit, even as the arms of Mother Mary also, she thought, enfolded her and the whole world. Her

pictures of earthly happiness and marriage faded; she was no longer conscious even of the rare delight that had never before failed her and that was the presence of her son Stephanus, close and resting by her side for a little while. Already she trembled, foreseeing, sharing, the pain that must surely come to one of her daughters. Throughout the feast she watched them, and her fears were not lessened, for Agatha was silent yet alert like one who conceals a strong hope and Katerina had a confused look. The younger girl ate nothing; although Barus himself held out to her the cups of wine and water, she scarcely wet her lips. Her troubled glance continued to go, backwards and forwards, from her sister to the young man.

Demetrius also was very quiet. He sat directly before Agatha, yet as he ate the little fish, the bits of meat and fowl that Barus offered, the figs and comfits, he did not raise his eyes, he did not speak to her. To Marah, this singular quiet that they shared betrayed them more certainly than eager speech or boldness. About them everything was peaceful. The worshippers feasted reverently; after the drinking and the hymns, which they sang in low voices, fearing discovery, they rested in decorous fashion. From time to time Barus and others of the elders with whom he lay and talked of pious things, looked sternly round, scanning the shadowy vault and the attitudes of the people. But their eyes soon turned away, they came back to their discussions satisfied. Nothing passed in the half-dark between the Christian brothers and sisters such as sometimes passed at these nightly gatherings, unseemly matters that had made the pagans swear that the Christian love-feasts were debauchery and lewdness and had caused certain bishops of the Church to forbid

them altogether. Many slept; many, like Barus and the elders, spoke together in hushed tones. Those who were troubled in soul or body stretched themselves before the graves, seeking visions; for often the holy presences revealed their virtue in this dream manner. All were enveloped in the warmth and the shadows and the low, flickering light, the mystery of the death-place that gave true life. And Marah, living in Katerina's pain, in Agatha's joy, knew that warmth and darkness and trembling were in her daughters' hearts also.

From that day Marah's heart was torn; she was possessed by forebodings, hopes, fears, rejoicing, bitterness. With Katerina she shrank, she frowned; with Agatha she smiled, her limbs loosened in a warmth that was smooth and buoyant as water, having no burning in it. For it was plain that Agatha loved and was beloved. Whenever Demetrius visited the house, which he did often, whether to work with Barus or to attend some Christian gathering, the same quiet was between them, as of a secret shared. Many times now Marah saw their glances meet and speak together; once the young man touched the girl's hand, and she did not draw back. And Katerina saw these things also. A new beauty had come to Agatha, making her seem more fair than her lovelier sister. From gazing out towards the puzzles and the hopes of love, her look had deepened, even as Marah's look deepened when she gazed across the city to the unknown sea. She went more blithely about her tasks, she showed a greater gentleness to Marah, an unfamiliar solicitude for her and for her coming child. "The blessing of the Mother is upon her," Marah thought. "Because she loves and is happy she is good." Yet the girl said

nothing; she did not give that share of her delight, in whispered words, caresses, for which her mother hungered.

And Katerina, too, was silent. Marah knew that, hidden in her chamber, she wept and struck her head upon the ground, she prayed, seeking to lose her dark desires, her craving, her rage of jealousy, in love for Him who was true love and the purification of every dark desire. But she said no word. Indeed, save when her father was by, she seldom spoke; she did but little work, she scarcely ate. She ceased to wash herself, and when Marah questioned her, "the body is corruption," she replied. And Marah dared not protest, for the holiest men spoke now as Katerina spoke. The body's pride and wickedness must at all times be mortified, they said, chastened with starvation, neglect, scourging. Yet seeing her daughter grow thin, grow pale and acid-tempered, like a fruit untouched by the sun, Marah became ever more alarmed. Once, hearing the girl crying in her room, she went in and put her arms about her. Katerina was half-kneeling, half-lying on the ground. "Oh! I have sinned, I have sinned," she moaned. And Marah, remembering how she, too, had almost fancied that she had done evil, loving the young Syrian, caressed her daughter and chid her gently. "No, you have not sinned," she said. "You are as innocent as a new babe." But Katerina pulled herself quickly away; crouching, she looked up at her mother with eyes that frightened Marah, the remorse in them was so strangely wrathful. "How can you know what is in my heart?" she said. Marah was utterly weary at that time, worn with the anxiety of her mind, the approaching travail of her body. She prayed, but no ease came to her; she knew that

sadness of the flesh that will not be comforted. She wept, thinking that God had cast her out.

And so at last, in her alarm and her confusion, she went to Barus. She had not wished to tell him of their daughters' case. The time was not yet ripe for words, she thought. Yet one evening, in the quiet of their bed, she told him. Outside the house the first autumn winds blew roughly; the child within her was grown heavy. She laid her head upon her husband's breast that the solace, the security that he could give, might flow directly into her. For although in the past she had not often gone to him thus, knowing his sternness, and although, when she had done so, he had not always soothed but rather had rebuked her foolishness, she was in such distress to-day that she felt certain of his kindness.

But Barus was angry. At first he had seemed patient. He let her speak fully of their daughters' love, of Agatha's joy and Katerina's suffering, of her own hope that the one should be made happy—married to Demetrius, although he was so very young and poor—and the other consoled, if Barus' cleverness could find a way of consolation. Then, suddenly, he broke out. He jumped to his feet, he turned upon her, crying that the whole matter was evil, that he would no more see Agatha wedded than Katerina sick with love, that their desires, their thoughts of marriage were sin and abomination. He stamped, he shouted, asking was this what she had taught her children, was this chastity, purity, Christian virtue, that they, scarcely nubile, in their father's decent home, should play secretly at whoredom? And Marah shrank, she trembled in her dismay, her astonishment. Never before had she seen Barus so enraged. His eyes narrowed, his mouth

swelled. She had hoped that he would make her distress appear a little thing, perhaps even foolish; now it and its cause became a thousand times more great, monstrous indeed and terrible. But above all she was aghast. She stared at the new man who was her husband, and her horror of his strangeness, at that moment, exceeded every other horror.

But again her grief for Agatha, for Katerina, overcame her. "Since you have not done your duty," Barus said, "I will tell them of their wickedness." And although Marah pleaded, prayed, although she went on her knees to him, begging that at the least she might be the one to chide, to punish, he would not hear her. "Because your body is sick I can forgive you," he said. "Insomuch as you have sinned, it is for the Lord and your own heart to judge your sin." The knowledge that it was she, in her weakness, her misjudgment, who had betrayed her daughters, swelled in Marah's throat until it seemed to rise and choke her. Barus turned to the door. Despairing, she stretched out her arms to him. "Oh, they will hate me!" she wept.

CHAPTER IV

Hereafter the house was full of anger and of grief. Georgius moved with lowered eyes, like one who knows of shame and fears and thinks: "it might have been my shame." Stephanus was puzzled, staring at his father's threatening face, at Marah's sorrow, at Agatha's coldness and Katerina's tears. For the older girl had remained silent before her father's accusation. "Her soul is hardened in its wickedness," Barus said. She had not hung her head, she had not wept when he reproved her, when he said that she must not see Demetrius again, must never think of him. But Katerina had flung herself at her father's knees, weeping and crying out, "It is not true! I do not love him!" so that Barus had instantly forgiven her.

Marah went sadly about her tasks, bewildered, lost in her home's unhappy unfamiliarity, picturing the bitterness, perhaps the hatred that Barus' words had sown between the sisters. Yet nothing was said; a dark quiet covered their enmity, like ash over a fire. As for Demetrius, he no longer came to work or worship in that house; Barus had dismissed him. Now Katerina passed the greater part of her days praying. In her mother's presence she cast her eyes down, she shrank from Marah's touch. And Agatha was pale, with hollow, anxious eyes. Whenever she dared she stood beside her window, which was in an upper storey and heavily barred. Marah saw this—although she made as though she did not see—and she saw also that Katerina watched her sister, spied upon her,

knowing for whom she looked so eagerly. Yet still nothing was said. The older girl remained kinder to her mother; when the weight of Marah's body made work difficult, she helped her gently. It was from her father that she turned, avoiding his look, his hand. Barus was more stern than ever. He went among them with a brooding air. For a short time past he had seemed a little weakened; his cheeks were sometimes flushed, and he complained of ache and fulness in the head and a peculiar swimming. But when Marah would have bidden a doctor tend him: "A leech can do nothing," he said. "It is my daughter's sin that has made me sick." All bowed before him, obeyed him, for he, the master, husband, father, was in that Christian household the living symbol of the Lord, having authority over their souls even as he had authority, by the laws of Rome, over their bodies.

So they came to a certain midday when Marah and her daughters sat at their meal together, alone, according to their habit. Barus was at his warehouse at that hour; his sons were at school. The girls sat silent, but Agatha looked restlessly here and there, as though perplexed, distracted, and Katerina's lips were closed tightly, as if upon some word that she longed yet feared to say. Once again she would not eat, though it was no fast day. Marah leaned towards her and offered her a fruit that was upon the table, one of a dish of figs, rounded and soft. "Eat, my daughter," she said. "It is right to praise the Lord in his good gifts."

But Katerina raised her eyes and looked, for the first time for many days, straight at her mother. "I do not judge you, my mother," she said; "but you

should know that what you have said is not true virtue. We should offer our humility and suffering to the Lord, not give false honour to our gluttony. I know this, although you did not teach it to me!" In her look was the same wrath that had been in it on the day when she had cried, "Oh, I have sinned!" But now not remorse but contempt was mingled with her anger. Her eyes accused, condemned her mother, so that Marah shrank back, astonished and dismayed as she had been before Barus, trembling before this scorn that was the strangest thing, she thought, that love had brought into their house. Agatha, too, was amazed. She ran and stood beside Marah. She stared at Katerina. "How dare you look at our mother so?" she said. "How dare you speak to her in that way?"

So the sisters faced each other, their anger openly disclosed. And Marah, thus caught between them, groaned aloud, her heart weeping for the ease that had been about her and the laughter that had sounded sometimes and the happiness that she had looked for. "Oh! my daughters!" she cried. But her cry was unheeded. Katerina had begun to speak. She could no longer withhold, it seemed, the wrath, the violence that suffering had put into her soul. From her loosened, trembling lips, came forth reproaches, accusations. She did not stamp or shout, yet she was fierce as Barus had been. And even as Barus had rebuked his wife, telling her that their daughters' sins were hers also, so it was her mother that Katerina accused. Furiously she cried that what she had said was true, that Marah was no Christian, that she loved the flesh and all its evils, that it was her example, her teaching, that had caused Agatha to pursue the young man Demetrius, seducing

him, sending him letters from their window, making lewd signs. "She had brought shame upon us all!" the girl cried, her voice rising. "I have seen him. He is there now. She has tempted him by offering him wickedness. And you"—she spoke so shrilly that Marah lifted her hands, as though to stop her ears or to ward off a blow—"you have allowed it against our father's will. You have let her fall into sin and disobedience. I have seen you look at them and smile. I have seen you look at the sea. I have seen you smell at fruits and flowers. I have seen you bear twelve children——" Her voice rose almost to a scream. And then, as suddenly as she had started, she stopped and clapped her hands over her face and ran from them.

Alone with Agatha in the hushed room, Marah also covered her face. "She is mad," she said. "Love and jealousy have made her mad." But feeling her elder daughter's hands upon her shoulders she looked up quickly. "Is it true?" she whispered. And Agatha nodded. Her look was sullen once again, cold with resentment. "I love him," she said. "And he loves me. There is no sin in it." "And is it true?" Marah whispered again, and as she spoke, her mind was not in that place but in the tavern where she had lain waiting for the young Syrian, who did not come—"Is it true that he is watching for you? Does he truly wish to marry you?" Agatha drew herself up and brought her hands to her bosom. "Yes," she said. "He asks me to go to him. To sail to Athens. If my father had willed it we should have been married." She stood looking before her; it seemed that she had altogether forgotten her mother. Marah put her arms about her, kissed her, weeping. "I only wished

that you should wed. I only wished you to be glad," she said. For a moment Agatha remained still. Then she too, without returning Marah's kiss, ran from her.

For the rest of that day Marah sat alone. A dulness was upon her. She sat with her hands folded, without tears, her thoughts floating. So it happened that it was not until evening, when Barus and his sons returned, that she knew that Agatha had fled from their house. To her husband's questions she answered, "I do not know." But Katerina cried: "She is with Demetrius!" And at once Barus started out, with Georgius and Stephanus, to find and to bring home his daughter. And again for many long hours Marah sat, absorbed and silent; and Katerina, white-faced and silent also, sat with her. In the house everything was quiet, but from time to time a noise of distant voices came from the city. The men of Smyrna laughed and shouted. That day the news had been brought from Italy that the Emperor Constantine had gained a mighty battle over the Roman tyrant. Because it was said that he was kindly towards the followers of Jesus, that many Christian merchants were his friends, the Christians of Smyrna revelled with their pagan fellows, celebrating Constantine's victory. Marah and her daughter paid no heed to these sounds. Sometimes Marah closed her eyes. She did not think of Katerina's pain nor of her husband's rage. After a while she did not think of what would happen if Barus took Agatha and her lover and chose to treat them as runaways were commonly treated. She clasped her hands tightly. "Star of the Sea," she prayed. "Care for my daughter."

Late in the night they heard a stumbling and a

knocking, with many groans and the noise of men moving with difficulty. And running to the door they found that it was Barus in the arms of his sons and of two other men, unconscious. His face was flushed, his breathing thickened. It seemed that he had learned, by the harbour, that Demetrius and a woman had sailed in a Greek ship and that the shock had stricken him. Georgius told Marah quickly how they had gone to Demetrius' room and to the harbour, how his father had swayed and they had caught him. Great tears stood in the boy's eyes. Katerina threw herself down beside Barus. "Ah! she has killed him!" she cried. As Marah bent over her husband's body, lifted his head that the blood might flow away from it, she thought that it was Stephanus's voice that exclaimed angrily: "It is not true! Would you make your sister a murderess?"

But Barus did not die. In a very little while he woke from his faintness, and after the leech had bled and purged him, he lay easily enough; his head did not ache and he spoke and moved freely. With the doctor, a priest visited him and remained for long hours by his bedside, praying. And presently, gathering up her courage, Marah took the priest aside and told him of Agatha's love and of her wickedness, which had made Barus sick, and how at first the girl had looked only to marriage, thinking no evil. "Now she will suffer on earth and burn in Hell," Marah said. "Demetrius is poor. I know of no other good cause why they should not have married." The priest was a just man, she thought; his wife had often worked and gossiped with Marah in the sufferings and rejoicings of the city, in the warm hardships of child-bed.

So the priest spoke with Barus, seeking to quiet the anger that was in him against his daughter. He spoke of the words of the saint Paul when the Preacher said: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged;" and again: "If a virgin marry she hath not sinned." But especially he spoke of a letter that the bishops had lately written to the churches bidding all fathers strive to wed their daughters to young Christian men however poor these young men might be; for in every city the maidens of the faith greatly outnumbered the young men, rich Christian youths were very few, and there were many wealthy, amorous heathen. "Demetrius was a free man," the priest said. "No doubt that he and your daughter have sold themselves now as slaves to some pagan, that they may live and work together and save themselves from you. If they sin it will be your sin as much as theirs." After this it seemed that Barus repented of his harshness. A message was sent to the churches of Greece asking that they should watch for Demetrius and Agatha and bind them together in marriage and send them back to Smyrna. But the lovers did not return. It was many years before Marah again embraced her daughter.

Meanwhile the hour of her delivery was drawing near. Already an old wife, skilled in women's arts, slept by her bed. And a manner of well-being came to Marah. Her body was easier; and Agatha was safe, she thought, at least from her father's punishment; and Barus had recovered from his sickness. Of Katerina she had not spoken. She had not told the priest or any other person of the girl's wild speech, or of her hatred for her mother and her sister. And she had said no word to Katerina. But about that

time, upon a day when Marah lay alone, resting, Katerina came of herself and asked her mother's pardon. "I have sinned," she said. "It is true that I loved Demetrius and would have taken him from Agatha, if I could. I am guilty of lust and envy and lying, and of evil-speaking against you, my mother." And Marah laid her hands on the girl's shoulders and kissed her forehead. "It is well," she said. "Yet it would be better to confess these matters to your father and to our churchly fathers. They are wiser than I." No warmth flowed from her towards her daughter. Katerina was quiet—humble, it seemed, and ashamed. But the same dark passion was in her eyes, and Marah thought that it was a cold passion.

The night before her labour she dreamed of the young Syrian. On this occasion he was not unkind, which was a strange thing to Marah. He turned his head to look at her; he smiled and took her hand. If she had not waked he would have kissed her, she fancied. Although the vision had visited her at the time of birth and not, as heretofore, of generation, she felt certain that her child would be a son and that he would live.

In fact she was delivered of another daughter, a small creature, very sallow and dark-haired, having the big nose that Barus had and the greatest head of any of Marah's children. Yet the child lived, and Marah suckled her with some pleasure, for in her heart she wanted no other son than Stephanus. She was named Eunice, happy victory, in commemoration of Barus' restored health and of the triumph that the Emperor Constantine's victory had brought to the Christian Church. For after this great battle the Christians were lifted up throughout the Roman

Empire. Constantine himself, who had been a pagan, a lover of Apollo, had become a Christian. It was said that on the eve of the fight he had been warned in a vision to place the letters of the name Christos upon his soldiers' shields, and that the next day, bowing before the holy sign that had made him victorious, he had instantly been converted. When all was over and Constantine was supreme ruler of the West, many other tales were told. The Christians swore that in the red sunset of that fateful eve the hosts of Heaven had been seen in the sky, riding to the help of Constantine. The pagans said the same, but in their tale the heavenly warriors were, not the angels of the Christian God, but the dead emperor Constantius, Constantine's father, and his soldiers. Constantius, now deified and strong in Olympus, had fought for his son, even as Castor and Pollux had fought for Rome against Hannibal, and Apollo had fought for Augustus at Actium and Phillipi. Whatever the tale, the Christian people rejoiced mightily. With the brethren of Smyrna, Barus and his sons and Katerina went to the holy places to give thanks and to praise Constantine. Marah did not go at that time. She still lay apart, unpurified as yet from the dangers and evils of childbirth.

On the night after she had been to the priest to give thanks and to be cleansed, made free to visit the sanctuaries and move again among the Christian people, Barus said to her: "I am grown old and weak. In future we will live in abstinence." Not many days later Katerina came to her father and asked his leave to go to a certain solitary land and to become one of the band of virgins that dwelt there in imitation of the Egyptian holy companies, chaste, humble, suffer-

ing. "The Lord has given you another daughter in my stead," she said. "It is time that I submitted myself to a Father who is greater than you." At this Barus was so distressed that Marah feared a return of his sickness. But no tears, no pleadings could move Katerina; and Barus dared not openly oppose her piety. She was in her fourteenth year when she departed from them, leaving her home, her father's love and all promise of earthly happiness.

CHAPTER V

From the day of Katerina's going a sadness settled upon Barus. He grew, not sterner, but stern in a more sombre fashion. His words took on a darker tone; he spoke constantly of the evils that beset the soul, of the sin that was in fleshly indulgence, of death and of the spirit's suffering. And he displayed the same despondency in every matter, whether it touched upon his body or his soul, or the hazards and opportunities of his fortune, or the concerns of the world about him or of the Catholic Church. At this time the world was hopeful, the Christians were jubilant. From his Western city, Constantine, with his ally Licinius, had sent forth an edict giving full freedom to the followers of Jesus. In future, they said, every man should worship as he pleased. And now Maximinius, the Church's persecutor in the East, had been defeated, and had died, and Licinius, friend of the Christian Constantine, ruled in his place. And though the Eastern Christians looked on Licinius with some suspicion, since he was a pagan, they still cried Hosannah! All that they had lost had been restored to them, their wealth, their places, their holy books and cups and houses. In every city fine new churches were rising up; from every side the heathen flocked to be converted. But while others rejoiced, Barus was downcast. "There is no good, no happiness in this world," he said.

And because he was sad his household was saddened also. Alone with Eunice and her maids Marah once again smiled and chattered and played with the little

child. And sometimes in the evenings Stephanus would bring his books and sit beside his mother and his sister. If Barus was by the boy remained still, never speaking or seeming to lift his eyes from his reading. But if by chance Barus was not with them he would sometimes spring suddenly to his feet and fling his books helter skelter, or he would catch Eunice in his arms and roll with her upon the floor or toss her in the air, laughing at his own pleasure and at her laughter. As she grew older he brought her toys that he had made, a little boat cut out of wood, a horse painted in many colours. When Georgius saw this he mocked his brother. But such games and gifts were rare. Commonly Stephanus was a quiet, bashful boy, and in his father's presence altogether hushed and subdued.

Throughout his school days he continued to go, whenever he could, to the meadows that were beside the river Meles and to the cave whence the river sprang and where Homer, the people said, had first sung the songs of Troy. To these green and cool places, he brought his body that manhood astonished, his thoughts that were, as Marah had divined, not always comfortable thoughts. The people said that nymphs dwelt in the cave. After he was twelve years old Stephanus often stared into its shadows, looking for the white bodies that gleamed there; he stretched his ears, hoping to catch the voices that could be heard plainly, they said, above the fountains' bubbling. He saw nothing, he heard nothing. Yet it was not his picture of the nymphs that troubled him. His dreams of them were gentle dreams; they did not waken in his heart the harsh concupiscence that every woman stirred in Georgius, and every semblance of woman, and every

word and every thought. Indeed Stephanus felt some surprise at his brother's often-confessed temptations. When his school-fellows spoke as Georgius spoke, whether in shame or boasting, when some of them sought for ease with him, or wished to bring him where ease might be discovered, Stephanus laughed and turned away. He did not scorn, he did not envy. Yet, because his father praised it, he did not praise the Christian rule of chastity, although he followed it. Often in the streets or at the holy gatherings he saw women whose faces pleased him and whom he loved secretly for many days. At that time he did not seek even to approach them.

It was the thought of God and godliness, of the Christ and of the Christian faith, that made him unquiet, that puzzled and distressed him so that often he could not rest happily in the murmuring cave whose fountains knew the tales of Achilles and of Hector, in the meadows where a hundred creatures called to him, birds, fish, beasts, insects, willow trees that drooped and sighed, plane trees that shed their skins, becoming wonderfully green and new again, like serpents. For as he grew older his first vision of the Lord Jesus had become little by little confused. In earliest childhood he had loved the gentle Lord of whom Marah spoke, the son of the High God, who was all wisdom and all charity and who had died that men, waxing in knowledge and in loving-kindness, might not die eternally but live with him, in love. At the time when the holy books were not in common use, being burnt, being hidden, Marah, remembering the words that she had copied so carefully when she herself had been a child, had often recited to her children the Gospel tales and the tales of the saint Paul and the words of Jesus and of

his Apostles. And she had spoken to them also of the Christian way of life, that had been lowly and simple. But Barus had said that his son, seeking eternal life, must fear God above every other person, thought or thing. He recited passages from the ancient Jewish books and bade Stephanus read these books and learn therein of God the Father. And later the boy's masters, wishing to teach him and his fellows the true doctrine, that they might distinguish between it and the heresies that were abroad, had spoken of the Holy Trinity, of the One Father, and of the Son who was God's Word made man, co-eternal with the Father, and of the Spirit who was of God also and whose power was mysteriously manifest in Nature. Seeking to understand these matters, the eyes of Stephanus' mind, unskilled and ever unwilling in the ways of learning, had grown dim.

He was taught that he must love and fear the three-fold God. And he was taught that beside this passion he must have a hatred for all earthiness, all pleasant things, which were traps of Satan. For in those days sin, which had been a matter of positive ill, as real as hunger or an enemy's blow, was grown so subtle that it was enough that a man should desire any object for his desire—the movement of his soul—to be judged sinful. All about him Stephanus saw this fear of sin, ever increasing, and this fear of every object that might awaken sinfulness. Strict Christians no longer banqueted lest their bellies should exult, they no longer looked on gracious shapes or colours lest their eyes be seduced, they eschewed the sound of flutes and cithars lest their ears be led astray, they did not bathe lest their skins enjoy an unholy pleasure. Images of death and suffering multiplied. While in the house

of God new riches were set forth, splendours and beauties hitherto unknown, carved and golden vessels, scents, embroidered raiment, in Christian homes everything was sad, was ugly. Bones that were not always relics of the martyrs lay there, and skulls to keep men's minds upon the one true reality. For everywhere in life was sin and evil. And again, when he reflected upon these matters, Stephanus was bewildered. For sometimes his mind told him that he sinned—when he looked at fair women or at the city temples, when his stomach coveted a particular dish, or his ears opened and his feet halted at the sound of music—yet his heart would have nothing of it, crying out that he was innocent. And at other times his heart troubled him and he did not know why.

With a friend he had, a school-fellow named Dorotheus, the son of the same priest who had prayed beside Barus and reasoned with him, Stephanus sometimes spoke of his bewilderment. Of Dorotheus he asked the questions that he dared not ask his masters, lest they suspect his heart or scold him for his ignorance. "How do you think of God?" he would say, or "How can you be certain that you love him?" or "Why does God allow evil?" And the other would answer that he thought of God as of a wise, good, just and merciful father, and that he loved Him in Himself and in other men, as Jesus had bidden him, and that sin persisted in the world because God would not have men compelled to honour and obey Him, but free to choose good and so be the more worthy of salvation. For in the soul of Dorotheus there were no doubts, no questions. "Who would not love so generous a Lord?" he said. But Stephanus could not form this image of the heavenly Father. He saw him stern

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and angry, ever ready to forbid joy and to punish offenders.

Yet sometimes it seemed to him that his heart moved to another spell. It happened one night in the spring of his fifteenth year, that he was sailing with Dorotheus on the bay of Smyrna. They went with the fishermen in their boats, which was a delight that Barus did not always forbid, since the father of Dorotheus allowed it and since the boys, after they had helped the fishermen, could bring a small part of the catch home, fresh food and cheap. In the darkness they sailed out. The hills about the bay were but a blacker sky; the city's lights winked and were gone, like blown-out candles. The nets were slung between two boats, and now, while some men held the steering oars and the sail's ropes, others lit great torches and hung them over the boat's side, and others, sitting in the bows, took gongs and beat regularly upon them, in the silence, in the moving lights, to call the fish, that love brightness and music. For a while Stephanus was too intent upon his pleasure—the work of the nets and of the sailing, the sudden sight of scarlet bodies, of eyes and strange mouths gaping upward, the shining stream of fish poured out upon the boat's floor—to heed any other matter. The wind was fresh. Beneath the black silver-spotted sky, the boat dipped and rose, riding over the waters. And the waters also were black, with spots and streams of gold—another, closer heaven. Once a squall struck them. Their sail lowered, the men crouched, looking only to their own safety. After the squall had passed the wind was keener, the waves tossed more vigorously. Stephanus sat on the boat's edge, delighting in its jumping. "It lives," he thought. "It is like a horse that rears and plunges."

He longed, then, to be for the remainder of his life a sailor, or at the least a rider, a soldier galloping across the grassy lands that please good horses.

But presently, as they returned, as they came into the smooth waters of the harbour, Stephanus looked back at the sea and at the huge sky above them. The torches were extinguished, the men quiet. Everything was silent, dark. From a last fishing-boat, far out in the bay, a last gong sounded. And for that moment awe came upon Stephanus. It seemed that he was aware of a greatness about him, a mighty life that was, perhaps, the life of the Spirit.

That night he would not return home with Dorotheus. "Let Barus beat me," he said, and leaving his friend, he went towards the seashore and then on until, at a certain place that he knew of, he slipped out of the city. The night was not so dark that he could not see his way. The wind was soft among the pine-trees. And after he had walked for some time he came again to the sea, and taking off his clothes he bathed himself. It pleased him to swim and dive, to feel the air and the cold water and the waves that mastered him and that he mastered. Then he climbed up the hill and lay with his belly to the earth, staring out at the sea that he had thought, perhaps, was part of the life of God, and of which he, too, swimming in the water, had felt himself a part. And then he lay upon his back and stared, for what seemed many hours, at the sky.

He was lying in this way upon the hillside, not far from a grove of pine-trees, when a noise of men moving in the wood startled him. With the noise of feet came the noise of voices groaning and lamenting, a very sad and fearful sound in that dark place, at that dark hour.

And Stephanus rose and crept in the direction of the wood. He went warily, knowing that it was unlawful for him to be upon the hill in the night-time. And as he drew nearer he saw lights and white-robed figures stepping here and there, and presently he saw torches clearly and many men and women bearing axes and knives and cymbals and branches and garlands of flowers. And he stopped and flattened himself upon the ground, not daring to go forward, lest he be caught and killed, nor yet to fly, held fast by fear and curiosity. For he guessed that what he had come upon was some secret ceremony of the pagans, some horrid, bloody rite dedicated to gods who were in truth devils of Hell and everlasting damnation.

The men were cutting down a tree. Raising their axes regularly, they made of their blows and of the movements of their feet a sort of dance. Others stood in a half circle, swaying their bodies to and fro and moaning and crying out as though in grievous mourning. Others again crouched upon the ground; they, too, moaned and lamented very piteously. And among those that wept most bitterly were many women. They flung their arms up and down; their shrill voices sharpened the mourning chant to agony. And Stephanus saw that beside them was one man who alone did not jerk his body or cry out, but stood quite still, erect and solemn in his white robe. On his head was a wreath. In his right hand he held a knife, and his left hand rested upon some horned creature, a goat, Stephanus thought, or a ram; and the beast and the bonds that tied it were decked also with flowers.

Now the tree was cut. It lay beside its stump, lit by the torches' fitful light, dark green and light green and fresh with needles. And the priest went to the

stump and laid the victim, which was a ram, upon this altar and set a wreath of pine-needles and violets upon its head and killed it. As the knife struck, some one clashed the cymbals, making a noise so harsh, so penetrating that it seemed to pass into Stephanus, to move in his very belly. He thought: "It is the sacrifice to the Devil!" and the hairs of his skin stood up. Yet he could not look away, nor close his ears to the chanting, which had risen now to a most despairing cry, as though all the people wept for the hewn tree and for the ram that the priest had slaughtered. So Stephanus lay and stared, expecting he knew not what horror, human death or hellish apparition. But after the ram had died he was astonished. The people ran to the carcase and began to tear it to pieces and to eat it, the heart first, which the priest took. And they smeared the blood upon their foreheads and upon the tree, and they cut handfuls of the ram's wool and tied them to the branches, and they tied wreaths and garlands on the tree likewise and effigies and figures that Stephanus could not see. Then for a moment they stood still and the priest cried, "Take comfort. He will live again!" And after that the people lifted up the tree, and carrying it very reverently, weeping, though not so loudly, they formed themselves into a procession and went slowly from the wood.

On his return home Stephanus, as he had foreseen, was beaten by his father. "He has been with a woman!" Barus cried. "He has been at the brothels!" Marah, pale from lack of sleep, begged Stephanus to tell them what he had done that he came to his bed after dawn, covered with earth and grasses and utterly weary. "I bathed in the sea, I rested on the hillside,"

Stephanus said. But although his mother, after she had looked into his face, nodded, Barus would not believe him. "You shall never again go out at night. You shall never again go fishing," he said.

Long after the stripes that he received faded from his body, the thought of them from his mind, the memory of that night remained with Stephanus. Often he pondered the ceremony he had witnessed, which was, as he had guessed even while he watched it, one of the sacred, secret rites of Cybele, the cutting of the pine-tree that was the symbol of her son Attis. Each year in the early spring Stephanus had seen the tree and its mourners pass sadly through the great central street of Smyrna, on its way to the temple of the Mother. And each year, a few days later, although the Christians were accustomed to hide themselves on these occasions, he had caught a glimpse also of the grand procession of Cybele herself, when, after she had enjoyed many strange washings, robings, adorations, feastings, her image rode through the town upon the shoulders of her servants, while the priests danced and screamed and clashed their cymbals and the people flung coins and gifts before their goddess and pelted her with white flowers until the image and the ground about were white also, like snow. But until the days that followed his adventure Stephanus had not known, having never before inquired, the meaning of these singular rites. Now he learnt that Attis was said to die each year and to rise again, and he was very much astonished. A Christian told him of the superstition. "They say that Attis is killed and that from his blood the violets spring. They hang his effigy upon the pine-tree. They carry it to Cybele's temple in memory of the cave wherein, according to their fables, she, his

mother, first mourned for him. And they say that, after a while, he rises up again. He lives and she rejoices."

But more often than he remembered the pine-tree, Attis and the strangeness of his death and of his resurrection, Stephanus remembered the happiness that he had known that night, gazing at the sky, the sea. Many times he sought that joy again, but where he strove he could not find it. As time passed he asked himself if what he had felt was in truth a holy awe, the true knowledge of God's presence. And once again he was puzzled.

Now he was past his sixteenth year. He had left his grammar school and was a student at the greater schools, learning the art of oratory. Here were pagan as well as Christian masters, and here were many books, Christian thought and pagan thought, which could be bought or borrowed, and which Stephanus read eagerly. For though he was a careless pupil, ever since the days when Homer's tales had so delighted him he had liked reading. And in every new book he hoped, he expected, to find the answer to his questions. In this way it chanced that he came upon certain writings of the ancient school called Stoic. In them he read that the Divine was everywhere, a fiery breath, permeating, penetrating all things; and he read also that in man there was a spark of this same divinity, which, if he lived according to the good laws of Nature—which were not those of a corrupt society—practising virtue constantly, would bring him at last to a fineness equal almost to the godhead. When he read this Stephanus' heart gave a great leap. He saw again the mighty, living night, the lovely sea; he knew again his own joy, feeling himself a part of that immensity.

But when he spoke to his pagan fellows of these teachings, they said: "The Stoa is an ancient thing. No man follows it now." And when he questioned his Christian masters, asking if there could be a morsel of the divine in man, they answered: "Man is sin and pride and corruption. It is only through the Grace of God, given in baptism, that he can find salvation;" which made Stephanus feel that he was lowly, helpless, dependent upon a chance gift, an act in which he had no part, no choice, no merit. Yet he was not altogether cast down. There were such diversities among the Christians that he still hoped to find a doctrine that would give man some dignity, some greater power to strive for his eternal happiness. So he read other, and this time Christian, books. And presently he came upon the words of the bishop Paul of Samosata and discovered the belief, of which he had heard sometimes, that the Lord Jesus was not the son of God but a man who, by his excellent works, his high, persistent virtue, had come to unity with the Godhead. And again Stephanus' heart leaped with joy, and he thought: "I can be, if I try, virtuous, happy as the Lord Jesus!" But when he spoke of Paul of Samosata to his Christian teachers, the mildest said that Paul had been a heretic and a father of heresies, the very father, maybe, of the abominations that Arius, the new Anti-Christ, was now preaching to the Alexandrians, seeking to divide and so destroy the Catholic Church. And the others cried in a loud voice: "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!"

At that time, although Dorotheus was still his best-beloved, he had other friends. Dorotheus lay in his very soul, he thought. Merely to look at his friend's dark eyes, to see his smile, was to know that the world was good and man a noble, lovely creature. But

Dorotheus never questioned, never argued, whereas Stephanus' other companions, Christian or pagan, often spoke of thought and virtue, the ways of God, the hopes of man. And Stephanus liked such disputations. Among these youths was one named Thaddeus, a reader of many books, a very easy talker. He professed the utmost contempt for the Christians, whose religion he knew well, he said. From him Stephanus heard many hard words concerning the Catholic Church. One day when they were walking upon a terrace, set high among the city's many terraces, he heard the hardest. "Look how you boast that you love but one lord," the young man said. "Yet even in your godhead you have three, and beneath these are as many angels and martyrs and apostles as we have gods and heroes. You pretend to despise the Jews, the Egyptians, for their empty shows, yet your churches are becoming as splendid as any temple. You have fine vessels and rich garments. And you have holy lights and oils, holy words and holy gestures. You partake of the body of your god in bread and wine as truly as in any ancient feasting. And he whom you worship, does he not die and rise again, like Osiris, like Attis? What is he but the holy victim whose flesh you eat and the scapegoat who rids you of your sins magically, like any vile criminal whose death makes the world clean by purging?"

Stephanus cried hotly: "It is not so!" but he could not answer the young man cleverly. He remembered, then, what Marah had said of the ancient Christians and how in the earliest days they had indeed boasted that they had no altars, no sacrifices. Often it had seemed to him that her tales of the meal that the first Christians ate together was not what the priests

now called it, a sharing in Christ's blood and body. "Jesus brought love into the world," he murmured, "and the promise of every man's salvation." But Thaddeus was not listening. He had stopped in his walk. He stood gazing down at the ground, and the expression of his face, from being stern, almost angry, had become curiously brooding. And when he presently spoke his voice was so changed that Stephanus stared at him in amazement. "Yet who would not believe," he said slowly, "in a father who was good and wise, who was all justice and all mercy—a bosom to lay one's head upon, a peace beyond all understanding. Who would not believe in such a one"—he paused and looked out across the city—"if he could?" And Stephanus suddenly grew cold, for it seemed that he had heard his own heart speaking.

CHAPTER VI

When he was eighteen years old Stephanus saw a girl who charmed him so that he had no thought for any other matter. He found her one summer evening, in the hour when the people feasted, building mighty fires and dancing round them. In many places the pagans still slew foul and holy victims at this season, and cast into the cleansing flames symbols of every object that they wished to purify, men and beasts and fruit. And after they had done this and had danced and bathed, they kissed and revelled throughout the hot summer night. But Stephanus, walking with Dorotheus by the sea, discovered no orgy but only three fires that certain young Christian men had lit, and by the fires the young men themselves and certain Christian maidens, running and playing. In the low sunset light Stephanus saw them jumping over the fires. They carried stones upon their heads. Some took ashes and rubbed them on their breasts or threw them at their neighbours, and then ran to the sea, pursuing and pursued, to wash the marks away. So they would be rid of ill luck, they said, all that year. Others again, pairs of young men and girls, held branches of fruit-trees and thrust them backward and forward through the flames. "Those are the sweet-hearts," Stephanus thought; for he knew of the feast, which was especially a feast of young men and maidens, and although not allowed, was not condemned by the Christian churches. The sterner brethren turned away, but many priests had wearied of preaching

against pastimes that they could not abolish altogether. It was said that marriages often followed them; and it was said that Constantine, the Western emperor for whom the whole Church, Western and Eastern, prayed daily, thought highly of marriage. Barus had ever forbidden Stephanus to join the play, and until to-day Stephanus had obeyed his father.

Now he went with Dorotheus towards the dancers. The jumping and washing and chasing had ceased. The young men and the girls were dancing in circles about the fire, moving slowly, softly, to the music of the sea and of their own singing. They held each other by the hand, the men in a small ring, the maidens enclosing them in a larger ring. One dancer faced this way, the other that, this one turned towards the flames, that one towards the sands, the sea. And as the maidens went, now very slowly, now a little faster, now stopping and swaying their bodies gently, they seemed to seek and yet to shun the young men. When Stephanus and Dorotheus drew near they all shouted, and a group of girls, breaking from their companions, ran and made a ring about the newcomers and, dancing and laughing, brought them to the fires. One of the girls was merrier than the rest. She threw her head back, and Stephanus thought that he had never seen so round a throat, so sweet a mouth, as she laughed at him. And as he and Dorotheus clasped hands with the young men, moved with them slowly, close to the moving circle of maidens, he looked always for this girl. When she came near he hurried, trying to see her face. But she hurried also and stopped only after she had passed him. Yet as she passed she smiled, and after she had passed she leaned back so far, in the pause she made, bending one knee, curving her

body, that he caught another smile, over her shoulder.

After the dance many remained upon the sands. They brought out baskets and flasks and ate and drank together, sucking the new figs, the new apples and pomegranates, and spitting out the skins and seeds quickly. But the greater number started to go back to the city, and seeing that the girl was of this company, Stephanus pulled Dorotheus by the hand and went with her. She walked a little apart with one other girl. "What is your name?" Stephanus asked her, and she said: "I am called Apollonia. I am a daughter of the sun!" "But you are a Christian?" Stephanus said. And the girl answered, smiling: "Yes. I am a Christian. My father bakes bread for the churches. If I am not home early he will beat me with his shovel!" He asked her where she lived, and she told him, and he asked if they might meet again, and she said yes, maybe—she and her sisters went each week to wash their linen by the river. She laughed often, mocking him, but her laugh was as lovely, Stephanus thought, as a fountain bubbling. Her voice was low, with a soft roundness that was like her throat and that made her words seem beautiful. And when they parted near her father's door, she did not laugh. They stood for a moment gazing at one another. And looking into her face, the same wonder came upon Stephanus, the same awe, the same excitement, that he had known before the spaces of the sea and of the huge, living night.

So he knew that he loved. And so he knew that what he had felt as a young boy was not God's presence. Yet this discovery brought not pain but a new pleasure. It made him happy to believe that the same passion was in the sky, the sea, his love and Apollonia.

He saw her again beside the river. At first she was surrounded by her sisters, so that Stephanus only spoke with her for a little while. But one day she slipped away alone and walked with him and sat a moment beneath a plane-tree. And he said: "Let us go into the cave. It is cooler there." And she said: "Not now. Not to-day." Yet a time came when he waited for her in the shadows where he had dreamed of Achilles and of Hector and of the nymphs, that had always remained hidden. Lying there, imagining her presence, Stephanus was very bold. He spoke a thousand tender words, gave her a thousand kisses. But when she presently sat beside him he talked of indifferent things, he did not so much as touch her fingers. And she also, who had been so full of mockery and laughter, was silent now; she looked away and dabbled her hands shyly in the water. After that she came each week to the cave, and they lay side by side, listening to the murmur of the fountains. At last he put his arms about her. She closed her eyes and moved a little, sighing. But even then he dared not speak of his desire, he dared do no more than stroke her hair, which had fallen about her shoulders.

The following week she did not meet him in the cave. Stephanus waited, thinking: "Her father, her mother have kept her. She will come to-morrow." But the next day passed and the next and the next; another week was gone, and still she did not come. Stephanus was distracted. He went to her father's shop, but caught no glimpse of her. He stood near the house, watching. So it happened that he saw her walking towards her home. It was at the hour when, in the past, she would have walked with him, returning from the cave. Now another youth was by her side.

She leaned against him; in a dark corner by the shop, they kissed. And for Stephanus the whole of life stood still, seemed to die. It did not come into his mind to do any violent thing. He was not conscious even of hatred for the youth who held her. The world was empty save for this sorrow, that he loved Apollonia and that she did not love him.

A peculiar bitterness was added to his pain. Some little while later the baker, Apollonia's father, came to Barus and told him that his daughter was with child and that it was Stephanus who had seduced her. Barus' rage was terrible; it seemed that he would have spat in his son's face. "The man wanted money," he cried. "I gave him what he asked for the sake of my good name. He can prove that you met the girl in the fields! Her sisters will swear that you were together!" "No, my father," Stephanus said. "I did not seduce her." "Accursed! Unclean!" Barus cried again. "You are unworthy of me and of the Christian Church! Dog that eats its vomit! Swine that revels in its dung!" "No, my father," Stephanus said. "I did not seduce her." And though Barus screamed, threatening him with the priests, with lashing, with prison, he would say no other words. At last, perhaps wearied, perhaps persuaded, Barus fell silent. Stephanus left him and went into another room and sat down, his elbows on his knees. Presently Marah came and sat beside him. She put her hand upon his arm. "My Stephanus," she said. "Is it not true that you loved this girl? I have seen her. She is very beautiful." She moved her fingers, caressing his arm shyly. Stephanus stared at the ground. "Yes, I loved her," he said. "I thought that I would love her for ever. And I would have taken her willingly. But I dared not——"

That night Stephanus left his bed, and climbing, as Agatha had done, over the wall of the courtyard, he ran down into the city. He went to the house of a harlot named Kalaethis, who was well known for her kindness to the young merchants and the students. Kalaethis would not receive him, but she sent him to a sister that she had, a singer and cithar-player. And with this woman, whose face he scarcely noticed, for whose body he cared nothing, Stephanus sought what he had longed so eagerly to find with Apollonia. Afterwards he lay silent. He could have wept. But the woman gave him wine, smiled at him. And presently—he did not know how it came about—he found himself telling her of his unhappiness, not the whole story of his love but the whole story of his desire and of his loss. She put her arms about him gently. “You must not grieve too much,” she said, and stroked his cheeks, his forehead, murmuring words that he did not hear but whose sound was familiar, comforting. After that night he often went to her, sometimes to enjoy her kisses and sometimes to talk with her and listen to the music that she played.

He spent the most part of his days with his friends—Dorotheus, whom he loved as his own soul, Thaddeus whose words excited and disturbed him. Thaddeus knew every hidden thing that was in the city and the hills. With him Stephanus sat in taverns where sailors drank and loved, told strange stories, displayed strange beasts; he visited the little houses, the dark temples where magicians wrought their spells or where ancient or forbidden rites were practised. “If we cannot discover God,” Thaddeus said, “let us at least discover man.” In a sanctuary in the mountains Stephanus

saw a priest lie with a stone, the sign of the earth and of the Mother Cybele, a very ancient holy marriage. In a darkened room that smelt of herbs and stale blood and dirty rags, he saw a man call upon dead men's souls, bidding them appear in a dish of well-water. The man, who was an Aramæan sorcerer, wore a black gown; a crown of black ivy leaves was on his head. By these and other tokens of the grave he sought to become one with Hades, who was also Dionysos, ruler of the Underworld, and by his identification with the god to obtain lordship over the dead. After he had offered sacrifice—a black lamb to the powers of darkness—he threw strong-smelling herbs upon a burning brazier, and bending over the fumes, began to sway his body to and fro. Thus crouching, he invoked the god by his secret name, which sounded very strange to Stephanus, and boldly declared the kinship that was between them. And he put incense in an earthen vessel and cried out to the ghosts to show themselves in the well-water, which was in a dish before the brazier. Stephanus stared and stared into the dish. He saw nothing. Yet his head became confused; it seemed to him that lights floated about the room. And when a voice spoke he was startled. But listening carefully, he recognised the Aramæan tones of the magician. In every case the words that he heard, the answers that he received to his questions, were of no consequence. And after they had left the house, Thaddeus told him that it was commonly so: the sorcerers and their ghosts had little wisdom. "At times they seem to know more than we know," he said, "but never more than some man knows." As for the god's secret title, the word of power that had so astonished Stephanus, it was but nonsense, Thaddeus

said, a muddle of Egyptian and Hebrew and Aramaic and Babylonian sacred names. Next day he took Stephanus to a little temple where there was an image of Hermes made of brass that uttered oracles, the people said. And he showed Stephanus how the wind-pipe of a goose was set in the image's head, that the priest, pretending to be the oracle, might speak through it. "Yet I saw lights in the sorcerer's room," Stephanus said. "And so did I," said Thaddeus. "Many strange things happen in the darkness of men's minds and in their dark hearts. Yet I cannot believe that I, when I am dead and move in a dish of water or the gullet of a goose, will be as foolish as those Aramæan shades!"

In a cellar, secretly, for the cult was unlawful in the Roman State, Stephanus saw a carved image that certain new men, heretical disciples of Manes, the Persian preacher, had set up. It was a double image, white above—the legless body of a man held upright—and black below—the legless body of a man projecting down. And at the point where the two bodies met, a fire burned. This was the god, light and darkness, good and evil, united in conflict. And the fire also was a very holy image, the sign of purification and of the Persian god and of many ancient gods and of Hestia. It burned at the loins of the figures because it was life itself, maker of all things material and spiritual. "They say that the divine is two," Thaddeus said, "radiance and purity, sin and matter. Yet they would seem to say also that dark and light are one, that the high god is a dark god, that death is but the other face of life, even as hate is but the other face of love, and agony the other face of joy. That God is the Devil! For in truth life is one. It is only in man's

little thought, that cannot conceive of eternity, that there is past and present, life and death, good and evil."

With Dorotheus Stephanus seldom spoke of these adventures. With him he swam in the sea, walked beneath the trees of the great forests, avoiding every dark matter and every spiritual matter. It was plain between them now that Stephanus no longer loved God as a Christian should. Yet he feared above everything to hurt his friend, to bring before his mind the thought that their two souls, so closely joined in life, would, at death, be altogether parted. Dorotheus was ever gentle, ever unquestioning. Sometimes, when Stephanus said some word that betrayed his lack of faith, he looked into his friend's face—very much, Stephanus thought, as Marah looked when she wanted to make sure if he spoke truth or falsehood. Most times he paid no attention whatsoever.

But there were greater matters at that time to distress and to alarm Stephanus. Men's minds were anxious. In every Eastern city the heresy of Arius, which had at first been no more than a murmuring of doctors, was grown to such importance that all the brethren quarrelled, threatened, raged on one side or the other. In Barus' house Georgius was greatly agitated. He was a priest now, and every day he preached on the foulness of the Alexandrian anti-Christ. He cried out against it in the churches and in the places where the Christians assembled, and in the streets where men gathered to hear him, where his Christian opponents, the followers of Arius, mocked and insulted him, where the pagans laughed and made obscene gestures as though to avert the evil eye and shouted: "Hoo! the croaker! Hoo! the raven!" But these disputes were as nothing compared with the

terror that had come once again upon all the Eastern Christians. Their emperor Licinius, the pagan who had been a friend of Constantine, had turned against them; he had become their enemy and the enemy of Constantine. Once again there was persecution. Already certain bishops had been pursued and their wealth taken from them. A day came when a man was killed for refusing to obey the new edicts.

And fear seized Stephanus. Every thought fell from him save the thought that the persecution was spreading and that Dorotheus would soon be threatened. For it was especially the Church's leaders that Licinius punished, and the father of Dorotheus was among the most considerable of the priests of Smyrna. And Stephanus knew that Dorotheus would not leave his father. Again and again he begged his friend to send him word if ever the soldiers came to his house. But Dorotheus said no, he would not lead Stephanus into any danger. "All that happens is God's will," he said. "He loves the world. Why should we be troubled?" "While you love me, my Dorotheus," Stephanus said. "I am happy."

Yet he trembled. Secretly he went to the priest's house and bribed a slave to bring him news if any alarm threatened his master. He ceased to wander through the town with Thaddeus; he no longer visited the cithar-player. If he could not be with his friend he sat reading in his room, or beside Marah and Eunice, who was now grown into a lusty child, not beautiful, with her big nose, but very lively.

And one night, while he was thus reading, a servant of the priest came running, breathless and with staring eyes, to tell him that the soldiers of the town had seized the priest and Dorotheus and taken them away.

And Stephanus flung down his books and without a word rushed from the house and through the dark streets to the prison. From a jailer he learnt that the priest was already in the blackest den, the cell that the magistrates kept especially for Christians. He was accused of concealing the wealth that belonged to his church and with refusing, in the prayers he offered for the Empire's well-being, to pray for Licinius, although he prayed for Constantine. And Stephanus learnt that Dorotheus was even now before the judges. He was charged as accomplice to his father's crime. He would surely be condemned and tortured, the jailer said, in order that the priest, witnessing his son's sufferings, might be persuaded to disclose his church's treasure.

Stephanus ran into the court where the judges sat. Save for a flare of torches in one place it was very dark, and his heart was beating so, his eyes were so confused by the dimness and the light, that at first he could make out nothing plainly. Then, in the pool of brightness that the torches made, he saw the face of Dorotheus and about him other faces that moved a little and other faces that were hard and strange and still. He was running forward when two soldiers stopped him and pushed him back into the shadows. He stood panting and agape. Dorotheus was before an altar. The faces that Stephanus saw were those of the judges and of the stone images of Licinius and of the god, Zeus the Friendly. The judges were speaking, but Stephanus could not hear what they said. He waited, wild with terror and with hope. And presently he heard his friend say, in a clear voice, "No, I will not sacrifice. I am a Christian!" and the judges say: "Take him away."

And Stephanus cried out, "Hypocrites! Murderers!" He rushed towards the altar. But the soldiers caught and held him. And one of the judges said: "Who is this man?" and another answered, peering into Stephanus' face, where he stood struggling between the guards: "He is a merchant's son—a Christian." And the first judge looked sternly at Stephanus, and said: "What does this mean? Has your Christ made you mad?"

And Stephanus ceased to struggle. He faced the judges. "No, I am not mad," he said. "And I am not a Christian. For what has Christ to do with this—that you kill an innocent man—your brother? Are there not gods who say that there is foulness in killing? Do not the teachers say that there is a divinity in man? You are hypocrites and murderers. You are shamed. You are vile!" He paused, for now his chest was tightened, his blood jumped with the violence of what had suddenly been disclosed to him. In that moment he knew his own heart, its hatred and its love, which had become a furious thing because Dorotheus suffered. "There are no gods!" he shouted. "And you are less than men—you and your infamous emperor who lies and steals and brings new torment to the world. For men are sacred! Men are holy! It is before men that you are shamed!" He stopped, and the judges drew away from him, covered their faces, murmuring among themselves. "He must die," they said. "He is dangerous. He has blasphemed against heaven and the State." So the soldiers took Stephanus and carried him to the courtyard of the prison and killed him quickly.

CHAPTER VII

Barus said: "I have given my life to this world, but my sons I have given to God." Saying these words he was proud, he was happy; he put his hand upon the shoulder of Georgius, he raised his eyes to heaven. Among the Christians the tale of Stephanus' death varied. Some said that the young man had denied the Christ and had been killed for State reasons; others said that he had provoked the judges by his Christian words and that it was but spite that would deprive him of a martyr's crown. When Marah had gone to take her son's body and to bury it, the prison masters had said certain things to her. She had not heard them. She knew only that Stephanus had died for his friend's sake. And Barus always believed that he had found, not a traitor's death, but martyrdom. "To God I have given my beloved sons," he said, "and my best beloved daughter."

But Marah wept. Throughout the nights, when Barus and her daughter were asleep, she cried, she struggled. Humbly she prayed of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to give her ease; meekly she begged of the Holy Mother, who also had wept, mourning a lost son, to make her heart accept its wretchedness. But her mind was grown too weary, her pride too small, perhaps, to know these mighty presences. She bowed her soul, offering her grief to Him who had assumed all the world's grief. This had been the aim, the use of her life: to rejoice and suffer in her children. "Thy will be done," she cried. For in truth this was the aim

and use of every Christian life: to suffer as the Christ had suffered, to offer the heart in sacrifice as the Christ had offered himself in sacrifice, for love of Him who was love and salvation and humanity.

Yet still she wept. Sometimes the priests comforted her when they said that maybe she would see her son again in Heaven. For God was ever merciful. "He had not lived," Marah sighed, and sighing again, confessed: "That is my sin, my great sin, that I loved life—and my Stephanus was not happy." The memory of her son's pain when Apollonia betrayed him returned to her constantly, so that after a while she began to seek out those who had known Stephanus to ask them if he had sorrowed or been at peace in that last year. Hiding herself from Barus, she questioned Thaddeus, the pagan, who answered: "His heart was easy. He had no fear of sin, which is the greatest fear and the greatest misery. I liked him well. He was a just man." Through Thaddeus she heard of the cithar-player and went also to question her. "He was sad at first," the woman said. "But presently he became gayer. He used to like to talk and to hear music. I have known many men. He was a good man. I think that he liked me." And Marah kissed her and said: "I am glad, I am glad."

Time passed. Now the persecution was ended. Licinius had been defeated by Constantine; he had died, and his laws and his thievings had been undone; Constantine and the Christian Church were everywhere triumphant. Now Georgius was among the chief priests of Smyrna—under the father of Dorotheus, who had been released—in place of Dorotheus, who had died of his wounds in prison. His thoughts, his heart were altogether taken up with

the heresy of Arius, which had become so grave a matter in the East that town was divided from town, house from house, brother from brother. And a year after peace had been given to the Christians, Georgius was called from his father's house to go to a great gathering of bishops and presbyters and scribes that Constantine was assembling at Nicæa, in order that the Church in holy council might declare her mind upon this heresy, might decide finally whether it was true to say, with Arius, that the Lord Jesus Christ was not of one substance with the Father, that, being the Son, he was the creation of the Father and therefore inferior to Him; or to say, with the remainder of the Church, that the First and Second Persons, were, with the Third, eternal and equal, One God. Georgius, setting out, was filled with eagerness. Standing in the doorway, Barus bade his son farewell. Marah supported him on his right hand and Eunice on his left, for he was grown very weak. He kissed Georgius and gave him his blessing. "Till we meet in Heaven!" he said. "I shall not be of this world when you return." And as he watched the young man ride away upon his mule, a slave following, Barus wept.

A very few days later, as he had foretold, Barus laid himself upon his bed and made ready to die. He was an old man and there was a thickness in his belly that hurt him, though not grievously. So the priest came and prayed over him and anointed him with holy oil, and a physician gave him draughts to soothe the pain and to make him sleep, and Marah sat by his bedside, tending him and praying. From time to time the girl Eunice, who was now twelve years old and tall as Agatha had been when Marah had last seen her, visited her father and made as though to pray and to

nurse him likewise. But Marah bade her go again. There was no need, she thought, for visions of death and suffering to dwell in a young heart. So Eunice went to the room where she slept alone and there performed certain ceremonies that she had learnt, Marah did not know how, with the intent of ridding Barus of his illness. It was in Marah's mind that such practices were heretical, possibly magical, but she gave little attention to them. A letter had been despatched to the lonely place where Katerina was, to bid her, Barus' favourite daughter, come to her home quickly. And Barus, of his own will, had sent the same message to Agatha and Demetrius. For these two had been discovered many years before. They were in Athens, well and happy, it seemed, and sufficiently prosperous. They had one son and one daughter. Marah had often asked herself if she would ever see her grandchildren.

Marah sat beside her husband's bed, washing and feeding and serving him. As Barus grew weaker she noticed a strange thing that saddened her a little, and which was that now, at the last, he seemed to turn from her. If she bent over him he moved his head away; he would not look at her or speak to her, although he spoke sometimes with the priest and prayed with him. And sitting there, Marah's mind brooded upon Barus and upon herself and how they had lived those thirty years together. For the first time, seeing that he seemed no longer to love her, she wondered if he had been, as she had been, faithful. And she wondered also, dreaming of those years of fear of him and of submission, if it had been an evil or a good thing for them that she had never known the pleasure that is in marriage. For the priests said that there was a holiness in the joining of two souls,

and compared the love of man and wife with the love of Jesus and his Church. And Marah knew that the pagans made a mystery of the body's love, saying that in it there was more than a symbol, there was a rite that was living and powerful. With Barus she had known the joining neither of the body nor of the soul. And her heart turned towards the young Syrian. She sighed. It seemed to her, then, that with her lover, through and beyond the consummation of the flesh, she might have found the spirit's union. But again, remembering the priests' words, she thought no, no, the flesh was all corruption.

Katerina did not come. And there would have been no time, as Marah knew, for Agatha to sail from Athens. But as the night gathered about Barus he did not weep for any daughter, nor for his sons, nor for his wife. If his eyes were open he looked straight before him, at the window and the sky beyond the window; if his lips moved it was to murmur of his soul, his sins, his sorrow for his sins, his hopes of Heaven. And Marah said to the priest: "Will he speak to me again?" Now he lay with his eyes shut, quite still. The physician said: "He will not live till morning." Yet that night and all the next day Marah and the priest watched, and though he did not stir, Barus was still living. Towards sundown his breathing changed. He was unconscious. "But do not lose hope," the priest said to Marah. "He may yet wake and know you." So she waited and waited, looking for that moment when she might yet wish him God-speed. His eyes were shut, his mouth open; the air and sound of death were on him. Long hours passed, and no noise that Marah or the priest made, no touch of theirs could rouse him. Yet at midnight, in his

coma, because there came a faint footfall, outside the room, the rattle stopped in his throat, he opened his eyes wide and turned them towards the door. His daughter Eunice came into the room. He gave a gentle sigh and closed his eyes and at dawn died peacefully.

Not long after Barus' death, Agatha returned to Smyrna. She brought her children, a boy of eight, a girl of six years old. Demetrius was not with her. He loved another woman, she said, and though he had not left their house, he had divorced himself from her so that she had been glad, when Barus' message came, to travel home. Her look was grave but not unhappy. She was more than ever like her mother. And holding her, feeling her close embrace, Marah discovered an ease that she had not known since Stephanus' death. For many days they sat together and spoke of what had come to them since they had parted. When Georgius returned from Nicæa they went together, with their children, to the house that he bought for them in a hillside village, overlooking the sea.

Georgius remained in Smyrna in his father's house. After his mourning, which was loud and long, for he had loved Barus and been happy in his company, he set himself to pursue his duties and to find a wife. His chief work was to discover and to punish the followers of Arius. For at Nicæa anathema had been pronounced upon the Alexandrian preacher. He had been declared a spoiler of souls, a child of the Devil, and Constantine had passed a law whereby his books were to be seized and burnt, and his disciples, wherever they refused to deliver up their evil writings, seized and condemned likewise. And the Council had said

also that it was lawful for a priest to marry, which was a question that had lately much exercised the bishops. So Georgius, who had long hesitated, waiting for guidance, went eagerly from Christian home to Christian home, seeking a wife who would give him happiness and help and children and the riddance of temptation. Each week he visited his mother and his sisters and told them of the maidens he had seen and of his labours in the church. It was not very long before Marah went with him to the city to speak with the father and mother of a certain girl of dowries and marriage portions and betrothals.

After his betrothal Georgius continued to visit Marah regularly. The village in which she and her daughters lived was small. Pagans lived there, but for the most part it was Christian. One day, while he was going from his mother's house, Georgius saw a man standing at a street corner preaching to a knot of people. As he drew near he heard the man say, speaking to the women who were there: "I ask you, women! Can the Son Jesus be of the substance of the Father? Can a child be of the same age and have the same body as his father?" The women were laughing. "No! No, indeed!" they answered. But when Georgius suddenly ran among them crying: "Heresy!" they fell back frightened, and a moment later, as the preacher trembled before Georgius and turned and ran, and Georgius ran after him still crying: "Heretic! Serpent! Satan!" they joined in the chase and shouted, with the other Christians who had come out of their homes and the pagans and all the people: "To the fire! To the fire, the heretic!"

The man was caught hiding in his house. He screamed and cowered; he vowed that he had no

books of Arius, that he was not truly, despite his words, a follower of Arius. But Georgius told some of the people to kindle a fire in the midst of the market-place, and he told others to hold the man while he and the elders of the village searched the house. And sure enough he found the books that the Church had anathematised, the poems and dissertations that Constantine had decreed must perish. And he took the books and cast them into the fire, and the children and the young folk of the village danced about them shouting: "Burn him! Burn the heretic!" When Marah and Agatha, drawn by the commotion, came to the market-place, they saw the man himself go bound into the flames, though whether it was Georgius or the angry villagers who had thrust him in, they could not say. Georgius stood before the burning. His eyes were closed as though he prayed, but his arms were lifted, his hands clutched the air as though he held and flung down upon the evil-doer the very wrath of Heaven. Marah ran back into her house and hid her face.

After that she was afraid of Georgius. She shivered when he declared that the rotten limb, the heretic, the magician, must be cut off from the healthy body, lest the whole of that body become rotted. She was silent in his presence, even as she had been silent for so many years in Barus' presence. She dared not tell him that sometimes in the village she spoke to the pagan women, gave them of her goats' milk when their goats were dry, allowed them to draw from her well when water was scanty. Always she hid from him the curious works that Eunice, his sister, performed. For Eunice's life was not the life of Marah or Agatha or any Christian woman. She spent much of her time in

the woods, gathering herbs and roots and flowers. It seemed that she talked more often than her mother with the pagan women. And in the kitchen at night she stewed and distilled, brewed unknown cordials, muttering strange prayers over the cauldrons. Or else, bending over the books that had belonged to Stephanus and that she had preserved every one, she read and read. Because of her solitary, scholarly ways, because she paid no heed to the young men of the village, Marah said that her last dream of the young Syrian, which she had dreamed before Eunice's birth, had been fulfilled and that her youngest daughter's soul was not a woman's but a man's soul.

But now Georgius came less and less to Marah's house. He was married; his home and his increasing duties held him. Marah remained with Agatha and their children and the slaves that Georgius had put to serve and guard them. There were trees beside the house, and in the spring and summer, flowers. In the other houses were other women, who chattered and laughed. And there were many other children to make a noise and a bustle round about. Marah breathed the soft air, sweet as sweet sleep; her eyes were filled by the sight of the serene, of the unquiet sea.

In the evening, when their work was finished, she and Agatha often rested beneath the trees and looked out and talked together. They spoke of Barus and of Katerina, his anger and her purity; of Stephanus and his sorrows and Georgius and his joys. And they spoke of their own delights and pains. Before them Agatha's children played. "I was very happy," Agatha said. "I became sad when Demetrius went to other women. But I do not grieve now. I think that I loved my children best. I gave too little. I asked too little

perhaps. For men must have love or conflict." And Marah told her daughter of her own youth and how she had desired the young Syrian and had not got him. They spoke of how Stephanus had not feared sin and how Georgius had ever been beset by harsh temptations. And Marah said: "Alas! Alas!" seeing again, in her mind's eye, the fire that her son had lit and the man that he had thrust into it. She thought of her uncle and of all the martyrs who had died because they said that men should love each other. "Where are those gentle preachers now?" she sighed. In certain places, still, Christians were raised against Christians, disputing concerning the Son who had been born in a cave, hung on a tree, mourned by his mother. Yet the Church was strong. The world bowed before her. Exulting in her pride, clothed in fine raiments, rich and powerful, she struck down her enemies.

So Marah sat with her daughter, watching the sea. They had fallen silent, and Marah dreamed alone of her young love and of Agatha's love, that both seemed as far away, now, as though they had never been. And she dreamed of her son Stephanus and of her sorrow for him, which could never altogether pass. She remembered the pain that she had suffered when her children first left her arms and became strangers. And she remembered her hope that some day she would know their souls, live in their lives, become one with them as she had never become one with Barus or with any man. Now these pains that had served no purpose, these hungry wishes that had all gone unfulfilled, were lost. Katerina sought God, and Georgius the glory of the Church; Agatha gave to her children the passion that her mother had given to her, which was God's will; Eunice sought knowledge.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE TREE

And Stephanus, seeking she knew not what, had died, far from her, least known of all. Yet the pagan and the harlot had said that he was a just and a good man. She could not cease to mourn him, nor to love her children and her children's children, who were, in truth, strangers. She breathed the air; she gazed out at the many-coloured sea.

THE END

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